EREC AND ENIDE

BY CHRÉTIEN DE TROYES

TRANSLATED BY

RUTH HARWOOD CLINE

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Translated by

RUTH HARWOOD CLINE

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Sometimes a question can change the direction of a career. As I was completing *Lancelot,* Professor Evelyn Vitz asked for my opinion as a translator about the identity of Chrétien de Troyes. I concluded from the internal evidence that he was a well-educated, religious aristocrat of about the same age as Count Henri of Champagne. His career included contacts with the comital court in Troyes; with Bury St. Edmund, Norfolk, and Windsor in England; with Rennes, Brittany; and with Beauvais and Lagny in modern France. At one point I speculated that Chrétien was a kinsman of the count, and I examined the genealogies of Count Henri and his father, Thibaut the Great, to see if his relatives had connections with those regions. I learned with interest of the English connections of the count's uncle Henry, bishop of Winchester and abbot of Glastonbury, and of his brother Guillaume, archbishop of Sens and Reims and papal legate in England. The most exciting possibility for a match with Chrétien was the count's little-known half brother Hugh of Blois. Hugh was a wounded knight, who entered religion as a monk of Tiron. Subsequently, Hugh became abbot of St. Benet of Holme in Norfolk, of Chertsey outside Windsor Forest near London, and of Lagny in Champagne near Paris. Further research showed, however, that Hugh's death or deposition at Lagny occurred in 1171, which would preclude his being the poet Chrétien who began his romances around that year. The common connections with Norfolk, Windsor, and Lagny suggest that the poet had come into contact with Hugh, perhaps as a member of his entourage.

My researches on Abbot Hugh brought me into contact with Professor Bennett Hill of the Department of History of Georgetown University, through my long-standing friend Professor Jo Ann Moran Cruz. They encouraged me to enter a doctoral program at Georgetown and to research the foundation of Hugh's congregation of Tiron as the topic for my dissertation. Thus the question about the identity of Chrétien led to my use of language and translating skills in scholarship as well as government service.

Verse translation is a long and solitary venture with much research and revision. Chrétien's works have been extensively and intensively studied. Articles have been written about interpretations of a phrase or about the personalities of his finely drawn characters. Admiration of Chrétien's genius enabled me to

see the translations of his romances to completion without ever becoming tired of the project.

I wish to express my deepest appreciation to my colleagues in the American Translators Association for their recognition of my efforts to render Chrétien de Troyes into English. Translators recognize the magnitude of the complexities of the source language and the effectiveness of the resolution of the dilemmas in the target language. Receiving the Louis Galantière Prize for the best non-German literary translation published in the United States between 1990 and 1992 for *Lancelot* was one of the most wonderful moments of my life.

I am exceedingly grateful for the unfailing love and support of my husband, William R. Cline, who encouraged me in the decision to enter the doctoral program of the Department of History of Georgetown University after almost fifteen years of service as a language officer at the U.S. Department of State. Our daughters, Alison Cline Earles and Marian Cline le Grelle, have also been a constant source of encouragement. This translation is dedicated to my younger brother, Robert Hodge Harwood. I have long intended to dedicate a translation of Chrétien to him, and *Erec and Enide* seems most appropriate because of the courage of the straightforward hero.

INTRODUCTION

Chrétien de Troyes was a writer of such brilliance that his works dominate the literature of the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Chrétien created the Arthurian romance as a literary genre. He was the first to write long love stories in Old French verse about the knights of King Arthur's Round Table and to situate Arthur's court at Camelot. He wrote the earliest known version of the love affair between Lancelot and Guinevere and the story of Perceval and the Quest of the Grail. His romances circulated widely in Europe and inspired adaptations and continuations in many languages over the centuries. The sources of the works of Malory, Chaucer, Tennyson, and Wagner, among many others, include the romances of Chrétien de Troyes.

The birth and death dates of Chrétien de Troyes are unknown. The widest range is estimated to be from 1135 to 1191. Presumably he was a mature adult when he wrote his first romance, *Erec and Enide,* around 1170. Among other indicators, the Christmas coronation in Nantes at the end of *Erec* may reflect a historical celebration in 1169. In the prologue to his second romance, *Cligès,* after referring to *Erec,* Chrétien mentions other works. He wrote a vernacular rendering, now lost, of Ovid's *Art of Love, The Amores,* and *Cures for Love.* He wrote two tales based on Ovid's *Metamorphoses:* a version of the Pelops legend, which he calls *The Shoulder Bite* and which has been lost, and a tale of the metamorphosis of a hoopoe, swallow, and nightingale, which is known as *Philomena.*[1] He wrote a version of the Tristan legend called *King Mark and Fair Isolde,* which has also been lost. The beginnings of his third and fourth romances, *Lancelot; or, The Knight of the Cart* and *Yvain; or, The Knight with the Lion,* seem to reflect the exceptionally late Pentecost of 1177, which fell two weeks before the 24 June feast of St. John. *Lancelot* is written for and dedicated to the Countess Marie of Champagne. It was completed by the clerk Godefroi de Leigny (Lagny) at Chrétien's direction. *Yvain*'s plot structure is similar to that of *Erec* and is set in the forest of Paimpont/Brocéliande in Brittany. Chrétien is thought to have worked on it alternately with *Lancelot.*[2] His haste to complete both works may be related to the departure of Count Henri of Champagne for the Holy Land in 1179. *Perceval; or, The Story of the Grail,* written for and dedicated to Count Philip of Flanders, regent of France and godfather of the youthful King Philip Augustus, was probably started between 1179 and 1181.[3] The continuator Gerbert de Montreuil wrote between

1226 and 1230 that Chrétien was overtaken by death while writing *Perceval*.[4] Philip of Flanders, the patron of this unfinished romance, died in 1191.[5] At some unspecified time, Chrétien also wrote two love songs, which have survived.[6] Whether Chrétien de Troyes is the same Chrétien who wrote *Guillaume d'Angleterre (William of England)*, a short religious romance of about three thousand verses without an Arthurian theme, set in Norfolk, has been disputed for over a century.[7] His lost *King Mark and Fair Isolde* would have been one of the earliest versions of the Tristan legend; it probably preceded the *Tristan* of Thomas d'Angleterre (c. 1172-1176) and of Béroul (late twelfth century, dated 1165-1190, but more probably written after 1190).[8] *Philomena* and *Guillaume* are not considered to be masterpieces. Chrétien's literary reputation is based upon his five romances, particularly *Lancelot* and *Perceval*.

THE IDENTITY OF CHRÉTIEN DE TROYES

The identity of Chrétien de Troyes is a mystery. An accepted idea is that he was a clerk attached to the court of Count Henri and Countess Marie of Champagne. Others have speculated that he was a minstrel, a herald, or a converted Jew.[9] A reasonable estimate of Chrétien's lifespan is that he was an adult in the 1160s and died in the 1180s or later. Since he wrote in the Champenois dialect, he presumably was a native of Champagne. An editor of *Philomena* perceived a change in Chrétien's writing style from Anglo-Norman to central French forms after *Erec* and during *Cligès* and concluded that Chrétien had Anglo-Norman contacts in his youth.[10] The internal evidence of his romances offers clues to his identity, but clues, however plausible, are not facts.

Works attributed to Chrétien de Troyes contain three variations of the name. The author of *Erec* is "Chrétien de Troyes," and the modifier may mean that Chrétien was not living in Troyes at that time. The author of *Philomena*, an adaptation of a tale from Ovid, is referred to as "Chrétien" and "Chrétien li Gois."[11] Both *Erec* and *Philomena* are listed as previous works of Chrétien in the prologue of *Cligès*, so Chrétien de Troyes, Chrétien li Gois, and Chrétien, author of *Cligès*, *Lancelot*, *Yvain*, and *Perceval*, are presumed to be the same man. If he lived in Troyes when they were composed, he had no need to identify his place of origin. The author of *Guillaume* is also named "Chrétien," but this shorter non-Arthurian

work is not mentioned in the list of works in the prologue of *Cligès.* The name "Chrétien" was uncommon in Champagne; it rarely appeared in an extensive search of the Champenois records. There was a Chrétien who was a canon (a clergyman who belonged to the collegiate church) of St. Loup of Troyes in 1173 and a clerk named Chrétien to whom the Count and Countess of Champagne granted a benefice at St. Maclou in Bar-sur-Aube in 1172.[12] The possibility that Chrétien is a pseudonym or a name taken in religion also cannot be excluded. Chrétien was the name of a rhetorician at Chartres and the pseudonym of Thomas à Becket.[13] The field for speculation about the name of the poet is a wide one. Nonetheless, the uncommonness of the name Chrétien in Champagne argues against its being used by more than one writer at a court whose kinship network included connections with Norfolk and Southern England.[14] This kinship network furnishes additional support for the contention that the Chrétien who wrote *Guillaume* was Chrétien de Troyes.

Count Henri of Champagne was directly descended from Charlemagne and William the Conqueror. His grandmother was a sister of Henry I of England (r. 1100-1135). His uncles were King Stephen of England (r. 1135-1154) and Henry, bishop of Winchester and abbot of Glastonbury. His younger brother, Guillaume aux Blanches Mains, was a papal legate in England and a negotiator in the quarrel between Henry II (r. 1154-1189) and Thomas à Becket, archbishop of Canterbury. His half brother Hugh was abbot of St. Benet of Holme in Norfolk and of Chertsey, outside London, before becoming abbot of Lagny.[15] Although the comital court was situated in Troyes, in southeast France, it had many connections by kinship with the British Isles.

Class and rank were important components of identity in the twelfth century. The absence of the name "Chrétien" on the charters has led some scholars to believe that Chrétien de Troyes was from a family of humble origin.[16] Nonetheless, the internal evidence of the aristocratic tendencies of Chrétien de Troyes is convincing.[17] Peasants in his writings, when not being churlish, are the source of quaint proverbs (the one exception is the craftsman John, who is Cligès's serf). The Chrétien who wrote *Guillaume* freely expresses contempt for the merchant class, and Chrétien de Troyes expresses such disdain in *Perceval.*[18] In the romances of Chrétien de Troyes, burghers appear merely as hosts offering lodgings to knights. All his heroes are from royal families,[19] and both *Guillaume* and *Perceval* raise the issue of nature versus nurture and uphold the view that "blood will

tell." Chrétien captures the royal manners: the princely heroes of *Erec* and *Yvain* are valiant but often haughty and brusque, and Guinevere is regal and aloof. In particular, Perceval's education as a knight is described with a sensitivity to the high ideals of chivalry that indicates familiarity with the training given to sons of noble households. These attitudes are consistent with an upbringing in an aristocratic family.

Moreover, Chrétien has the interests typical of a member of a wealthy military family. The plot of *Erec* is a framework for descriptions of battles that are enthusiastic to the point of bloodthirstiness. Chrétien describes splendid melee tournaments in *Erec, Cligès,* and *Lancelot* and displays a detailed knowledge of escutcheons. In *Cligès,* he accurately plans a successful military invasion of Windsor Castle from inside the upper ward. He attended banquets, at least as an observer, and was fascinated by the luxury goods available at fairs. The king in *Guillaume,* turned merchant, is knowledgeable about wax, leather, alum, dye, and other commodities sold at fairs.[20] *Erec* is extended by repeated digressions into descriptions of furs, embroidery, silks, brocades, ivory furniture, and jewels so sumptuous that Chrétien may be describing the treasures and regalia of the English crown.[21] Chrétien's later works are more unified but have flashes of opulence, with one last fond description of a fair in *Perceval.* Such familiarity with combat and luxury items suggests experience with aristocratic households. Every indication in his writing is that Chrétien was an aristocrat, raised in an aristocratic household, and thoroughly familiar with, and sympathetic to, the motivations and reasoning of the nobility.

Moreover, the internal evidence of his romances shows that Chrétien de Troyes received the education given to younger or natural sons of aristocratic families who were destined for the clergy. Such young men were educated in the household and later possibly in episcopal or monastic schools, before or even after they assumed the ecclesiastical appointments consistent with their rank. In *Erec* Chrétien praises the quadrivium of the advanced liberal arts of geometry, astronomy, arithmetic, and music, which suggests that he was knowledgeable about studies beyond the trivium of the lower liberal arts of Latin grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic (logic).[22] Chrétien's references to Macrobius and the quadrivium might suggest associations with Chartres, although he could have obtained an excellent education at the episcopal school of Troyes, among other schools in Champagne.[23] His familiarity with Ovid and Macrobius indicates

that he had read some of the Latin authors of the trivium.[24] His immersion into books 6 and 7 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* gave him inspiration for *Philomena, Cligès,* and presumably the lost *Shoulder Bite.* In creating *Philomena,* Chrétien also used Hyginus's *Fabulae,* which was read by John of Salisbury.[25] Chrétien's description of the fawning courtiers in *Cligès* is also inspired by John of Salisbury's *Polycraticus* (1159).[26] In the vernacular literature, Chrétien had read the *Chanson de Roland,* the early part of the *William of Orange* cycle, Wace's *Roman de Brut* and *Roman de Rou,* the *Roman d'Eneas, Roman de Thèbes,* and *Roman de Troie* (c. 1160).[27] He was a critical listener to stories circulating orally in the repertories of professional entertainers. Obviously he heard a Breton form of the Welsh tales of *Geraint* and *Owain,* which were later written down and are usually grouped with the tales of the *Mabinogion,* for they are the basis of his romances of *Erec* and *Yvain. Perceval,* apparently based on a book owned by Count Philip of Flanders, may have a common source with the Welsh tale *Peredur* and the Old French *Perlesvaus.* Thus Chrétien was familiar with classical and vernacular literature and claimed access to ecclesiastical and court libraries.[28] His level of education is consistent with his being in holy orders.

In addition to receiving a clerical education, Chrétien had the moral outlook of a clergyman. Whereas the shift to Ovidian themes is apparent in *Cligès,* religious themes appear consistently in all of Chrétien's works.[29] Naming conveys the essence of personal rank, kinship, reputation, and identity. The gift of tears is used in all the romances and in *Philomena.*[30] The virtue of humility is mentioned in *Guillaume,* and the virtue of charity is emphasized in *Perceval.* The sin of covetousness is mentioned in *Guillaume,* and the sin of pride is condemned in *Erec* and *Yvain. Lancelot* is a study of the sin of lust. Bestiaries and lapidaries are included in the romances. The *via regia,* the straight direct road, is mentioned frequently in *Erec* and *Cligès* and is emphasized in *Lancelot* and *Perceval.* Joy, a recurrent theme in Chrétien's romances, sometimes borders on mystical ecstasy. Chrétien's heroes are pious, and his heroines, with the exception of Guinevere,[31] are conventionally virtuous. Reconciliation in marriage is an important theme: Enide, Guinevere, and Laudine are all restored to their husbands after periods of estrangement or separation. Conflicts are settled by the old method of judicial combat, which is premised on the belief that God sides with the right. Chrétien quotes and mischievously misquotes Scripture in his romances and writes consistently about religious conversion. The Chrétien who wrote *Guillaume*

describes a king who abandoned throne, fortune, and family at the command of a voice from Heaven. The heroes of the later romances of Chrétien de Troyes, Lancelot, Yvain, and Perceval, are counseled and assisted by hermits. Chrétien de Troyes may be expressing sympathy with the newer eremitical orders as well as with the more formal religious establishment. *Cligès*'s Fenice, Lancelot, and *Yvain*'s lion are sometimes presented as Christ symbols. Both Yvain and Perceval experience redemption, and *Perceval* is imbued with religious instruction and symbolism. Chrétien's infrequent antifeminism and anti-Semitism were typical of the clergy of his time. His romances reflect the experience and perceptiveness of a clergyman in close association with the aristocracy, like the canons at St. Loup and St. Maclou.

Based on the internal evidence of his works, I am persuaded that Chrétien de Troyes was an aristocrat in holy orders. Possibly he had an ecclesiastical benefice or a position at court from which he derived an independent, comfortable income, together with the opportunity to travel and the leisure to write and polish his works. It is generally agreed that he was very close to the House of Blois-Champagne throughout the most productive years of his life, and he may have been associated with its aristocratic clergymen and benefited from its kinship network in his youth. If so, he may have known Norfolk, Winchester, Windsor, and Lagny through a connection with Bishop Henry of Winchester, Abbot Hugh, and Archbishop Guillaume aux Blanches Mains. There were several ways he might have come into contact with the court of Henry II during his travels.

The geography of Chrétien's literary world is cosmopolitan: he mentions Mount Snowdon, Carlisle, Edinburgh, and York in Great Britain and Wales; Nantes in Brittany; Regensburg, Cologne, and the Black Forest in modern Germany; Tudela and Almería in Spain; Candia in Crete; Athens in Greece; and Constantinople in present-day Turkey. Yet he displays no knowledge of these places except their location on the map. In contrast, *Guillaume* is set in Norfolk and contains references to specific smaller towns in the British Isles. *Cligès* is partly set in southern England, mainly at Windsor Castle and at the old tournament ground at Wallingford. Its descriptions are so detailed that they suggest Chrétien visited England personally.[32]

At the time when Chrétien was writing *Erec*, he seems to have had access to information about the court of Henry II. In 1168 Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine separated. Eleanor returned to Aquitaine and established her court at

Poitiers, although she visited England occasionally. In the 1160s Henry II consolidated his French and English lands. In May 1169 he established their son Geoffrey (1158-1186) as duke of Brittany, to whom the Breton lords paid homage at Rennes. Henry II held a Christmas court with Geoffrey at Nantes that may be reflected in the literary setting of Erec's coronation by King Arthur. In April 1170, Henry II landed at Portsmouth after four years on the Continent. He held an Easter court at Windsor Castle on 5 April and summoned a great council. His son Henry (1155-1183) crossed in early June and was crowned coregent on 14 June 1170 in London.[33] The archbishop of York performed the coronation, a deliberate affront to Thomas à Becket, archbishop of Canterbury; Henry's wife, Margaret of France, and mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, did not attend.[34]

The detailed description of the Christmas coronation at Nantes in *Erec,* the Winchester-London-Windsor-Wallingford area in *Cligès,* and the fountain of Barenton outside Rennes in *Yvain* may correspond to this 1169-1170 period. Possibly Chrétien de Troyes attended the Rennes installation of Geoffrey, duke of Brittany, in May 1169, visited the nearby fountain of Barenton, attended the Christmas court at Nantes, and followed Henry II to England in April–May 1170.[35] He might have attended the coronation of Henry the Young King, which induced him to portray the leopards of Henry II's coat of arms on Erec's rug and the coronation chairs. The dual coronation of Erec and Enide may have reflected the outrage of Louis VII that his daughter Margaret was not invited to be crowned with her husband. Possibly with Henry, bishop of Winchester, or Henry the Young King, Chrétien might have visited Windsor Castle and seen it under construction as he describes it in *Cligès.*[36] If so, Chrétien would have seen the royal regalia and "sterlings blanch" he describes in Erec's coronation. He would have learned the geography of southern England.[37] He would have learned of Henry II's friend Brian of the Isles and of the tourney grounds on the plain below Edinburgh and at Wallingford.[38] Most significantly for the development of the Arthurian romance, at the Plantagenet courts he would have encountered the English court writers. In addition to the late Geoffrey of Monmouth, two contemporary writers strongly influenced his work: Wace and Thomas d'Angleterre.

The English court had become the center for literature about King Arthur.[39] In the literature of the early twelfth century Arthur appeared modeled after Charlemagne.[40] Two works written during the reign of Henry I mention Arthur.

William of Malmesbury's *Acts of the Kings of England,* written in 1125, describes Arthur's victory at Mount Badon and his undiscovered tomb. Arthur does not emerge in a positive light in Caradoc of Llancarfan's *Life of St. Gildas,* written in 1130. In his fanciful *History of the Kings of Britain,* written in Latin in 1136 and dedicated to Henry's nephew, King Stephen, and Henry's natural son Robert, earl of Gloucester, Geoffrey of Monmouth attributed to Arthur an empire that extended from Scotland to Rome. Geoffrey described Arthur's twelve battles with the Saxons culminating in victory on Mount Badon in 516 and invented or adapted tales of Arthur's European conquests, his betrayal by his wife and nephew Mordred, and his fall at the last Battle of Camlann (542). Geoffrey's *Life of Merlin,* written in Latin between 1136 and 1138, contained additional material about Arthur, including his sister Morgan and her magical powers, which Chrétien incorporated into *Erec.*

A native of the Isle of Jersey, the Norman Wace translated and adopted Geoffrey's Latin prose work into French verse in the *Roman de Brut,* completed in 1155, at the beginning of the reign of Henry II. Wace expanded the section on Arthur in his *Brut* and introduced the Round Table. In 1160 Wace began the *Roman de Rou,* a verse history of the dukes of Normandy, beginning with the Norseman Rollo or Rou. The last two parts of Wace's *Rou* are dated 1170–1174. Chrétien's *Philomena* and *Erec* were about equally influenced by Wace's *Brut,* and its influence persisted in *Cligès.*[41] Chrétien's *Philomena* and *Yvain* contain versions of a quotation from Wace's *Rou,* and *Philomena* has five Anglo-Norman proverbs in common with that work.[42] Clearly Chrétien was familiar with, and influenced by, Wace's works.

Little is known about the life of Thomas d'Angleterre. His *Tristan* has survived in fragments and was reconstructed by Bédier. Thomas' *Tristan* is now dated 1172–1176, reflecting Henry II's seizure of Ireland.[43] The few references to Tristan in *Erec* are to a version that was written down in the thirteenth century; the most salient feature is the naming of St. Samson's Isle as the place where Tristan defeated Morholt.[44] Chrétien may well have drawn on a Provençal or poetic source for his lost *King Mark and Fair Isolde.* Yet Chrétien's fascination with the Tristan legend became a near obsession once he became familiar with Thomas's courtly work, in which the potion is more a symbol of the everlasting love between the couple than the cause of it. *Cligès* is almost an anti-*Tristan* written in reaction to Thomas, with several denunciations of the adulterous love affair.[45] Chrétien's

Lancelot, while another version of the Tristan legend, again with characters with different names, limited them to a single tryst before the queen was restored to her husband. His version is more religious than the *Tristan* of Thomas.

Thus the Arthurian romances of Chrétien de Troyes are an extension of the English literary tradition. The King Arthur created by Chrétien de Troyes in *Erec* rules a realm corresponding to the lands of Henry II from Wales to Poitou. In *Erec* and other romances Chrétien shows himself to be supportive of the territorial ambitions of Henry II with regard to Brittany.[46] In *Erec,* King Arthur's capital seat is at Nantes, where Erec's coronation takes place. Erec's friend Guivret the Small bears the same sobriquet as the Duke of Brittany, Conan IV the Small. The next two romances, *Cligès* and *Yvain,* also contain scenes in which King Arthur crosses to Brittany and is joyously acclaimed by the Bretons as their overlord. These political sympathies and the unquestioned literary ability of Chrétien de Troyes would have pleased Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine. Thus Chrétien may have written *Erec* while in the entourage of Henry II or of Eleanor in Poitiers and returned to Troyes before hostilities broke out between 1173 and 1174.[47]

Chrétien de Troyes dedicated *Lancelot* to Countess Marie of Champagne, probably around 1177. *Lancelot* seems to have been written concurrently with *Yvain,* which bears no dedication. When *Lancelot* was nearly completed, Chrétien turned it over to a clerk named Godefroi de Leigny (Lagny) with instructions about the ending. Count Henri took the cross in 1179 and departed for the Holy Land. Chrétien's haste to complete these two romances and his decision to delegate the romance requested by Countess Marie suggest closeness to Count Henri. Count Henri returned to Troyes in 1181 and died a week later. Countess Marie administered Champagne for their minor son, but Chrétien acquired a new patron in Count Philip of Flanders, at whose request he began *Perceval; or, The Story of the Grail.* Chrétien died before *Perceval* was completed.

The identity of Chrétien de Troyes will always remain a matter of conjecture. Scholars have made various suggestions that Chrétien was born into a humble family in Troyes, developed his writing skills without formal education, adopted the aristocratic values of his social superiors, never traveled outside Troyes, obtained his British material at the local fairground, invented his illustrious sources as rhetorical topoi, knew only the Latin mass readings and the vernacular romances, and was totally dependent on his patrons. The identity constructed in this introduction, which posits Chrétien as an aristocratic clergyman with a

benefice who traveled to Brittany and Britain in noble and royal entourages before returning to Troyes to write for a family with extensive kinship networks in Britain, offers a clearer and simpler explanation for the development of his literary career.

SUMMARY

Chrétien's earliest romance, *Erec and Enide*, is the tale of the twenty-five-year-old son of the King of Further Wales who is known by his Breton name of Erec. The impetus to the first part of the romance is King Arthur's decision to revive the custom of the hunt of the white stag, whereby the slayer of the stag kisses the fairest maiden at court. Although warned by Sir Gawain that each knight will consider his maiden fairest and quarreling will ensue, King Arthur orders the hunt to proceed. Erec accompanies Queen Guinevere at the hunt and is insulted by a party of strangers consisting of a knight, a noble maiden, and a dwarf. With the queen's permission, Erec follows the knight to a castle and is lodged and armed by a poor vavasor, who has a teenage daughter of surpassing beauty, attired in a shabby dress. Erec is informed that the knight and the maiden are proceeding to another beauty contest, that of the sparrow hawk, where the knight with the fairest maiden must defend her right to claim a sparrow hawk on a silver perch. Erec boldly requests that the vavasor give him arms and his lovely daughter's hand in marriage. He proposes both to win the sparrow hawk with her and to raise her to royal status. The vavasor consents; the marriage is arranged, and the arrogant knight Yder is defeated. Erec returns to King Arthur's court with his lovely fiancée, who is still wearing a worn-out dress, because he considers only Queen Guinevere worthy to clothe her. Attired in the queen's beautiful dress, the maiden is presented to King Arthur and the knights of the Round Table, and she is the unanimous choice to receive the kiss of King Arthur, the slayer of the white stag.

At a sumptuous wedding, Erec and his maiden are married, and she is named for the first time: Enide. After distinguishing himself at a tournament between York and Edinburgh, Erec takes his bride home to Carnant, where the couple's mutual passion induces him to neglect his chivalric duties. When Enide murmurs to herself that her sleeping husband is being accused of

recreancy, Erec overhears and, stung by her criticism, orders her to prepare for travel in her finest clothes. Erec takes his wife off on a journey of adventure and sternly admonishes her not to speak to him or warn him of any impending dangers.

The royal couple enters a chaotic world. Erec must rescue Enide from three and then five robber knights, whose horses he turns over to Enide's care. Despite Erec's threats, Enide cannot refrain from warning him about these assailants. Next a lawless count plots to murder Erec and seduce Enide. Resourcefully, she obtains a delay by lying and then warns Erec so they can escape. After another combat, Erec makes a fast friend, Guivret the Small, a tiny knight who is bold of heart. Although Erec has accumulated many wounds in his skirmishes, he refuses the churlish summons to King Arthur's court by the steward Kay. When Kay insists, Erec unhorses him. Sir Gawain distracts Erec while Arthur's court moves directly into his path. After one night of refreshment and medical treatment, Erec and Enide proceed on their way. Erec slays two cruel giants but then collapses from exhaustion and blood loss. Enide believes him dead and is seized by Count Oringle of Limors, who lays the corpse out in his castle and forces Enide into an abusive marriage. When Erec revives, the horrified castle folk flee what they believe to be a body possessed by a demon, and Erec slays the count and rides off with his wife on his war horse. By moonlight, the estranged couple reconciles, with Erec reassured of his wife's love and respect for him and more in love with her than ever. Guivret the Small, coming to rescue Enide, has another skirmish with Erec unawares. Guivret takes his badly wounded friend to his sisters for treatment and healing.

In the third part of the romance, Erec and Enide have an otherworldly adventure called the Joy of the Court at the court of King Evrain. Passing pointed stakes bearing the heads of defeated knights, Erec defeats a giant knight named Maboagrain in an enchanted orchard. The knight is a captive of love because he gave his word to his sweetheart that he would not leave the orchard and her until he was overcome by a stronger knight. When he is defeated by Erec, he is released. The maiden who so bound him is Enide's cousin, and Enide recounts her good fortune in marrying Erec. Erec and Enide join King Arthur's court for some time and are at Tintagel when Erec's father dies. The couple is crowned together in King Arthur's presence in a magnificent ceremony at Nantes in Brittany, and the romance ends with the coronation feast.

THEMATIC STRUCTURES

The adventure story that is the source of *Erec* has the Breton Guerec as its hero. During the twelfth century this Breton tale passed into French and Welsh. It became the source of a Welsh *mabinogi* that was written down in the thirteenth century, entitled *Geraint and Enid* or *Geraint ab Erbin. Geraint* closely resembles Chrétien's *Erec,* although it introduces the new theme that Geraint suspects Enid of infidelity.[48]

In the series of episodes of *Erec,* Chrétien establishes the basic structure of his subsequent romances. Four of his five romances begin with a prologue containing a statement of purpose, two with praise of a specific patron. They open with a scene at King Arthur's court, usually assembled for one of the major religious feasts of Easter or Pentecost, where an unusual incident or description thereof is an impetus to the hero to set off on an adventure that leads him to the heroine. *Erec* is oriented around the church year: Erec sets out at Easter, marries Enide at Pentecost, and is crowned king at Christmas. The hero becomes involved in a series of episodes, usually violent, that afford him an opportunity to develop or display the various facets of his character. Some are merely tests of strength or prowess; others are chivalrous efforts to help an unfortunate or weak individual in need of assistance; still others are tests of faith against demonic, gigantic, or supernatural foes. In his early works, *Erec* and *Cligès,* the episodes tend to focus on the hero's prowess. In *Lancelot,* Chrétien structures the events to show by turns Lancelot's courage, faith, fidelity, mortality, strength, and passion. In *Yvain* he develops the hero's courageous and compassionate nature as he defends women in need against increasingly more formidable opponents, beset by conflicting loyalties and time constraints. Chrétien follows this sophisticated structure in *Perceval* when he arranges the incidents to show the emotional and spiritual growth of the naive young hero. Often there is an episode involving Arthur's court midway in the romance in which the hero enjoys a momentary respite from his trials. Sir Gawain, the King's nephew, is established as the embodiment of knightly prowess and courtesy, and at the end of his testing the hero is given an opportunity to measure himself against Sir Gawain, whom the court considers to be the finest knight in the world. Last, there is an otherworldly adventure in which the hero enters a world outside of mortal time and space from which return is difficult if not impossible, frequently heralded by white

animals and a dangerous passage. There, in the role of a liberator of captives, he confronts supernatural and mysterious forces. *Erec*'s Joy of the Court, *Cligès*'s tower, *Lancelot*'s realm of Gorre, *Yvain*'s Castle of Evil Adventure, and *Perceval*'s Grail Castle are all derived from Celtic tales of the otherworld. While Chrétien's flaxen-haired heroines are beautiful and virtuous, they retain much of the charm and adroitness of their fairy prototypes who inhabited these otherworld realms. Although the five romances are original and different, these common structures and features served Chrétien well during the course of his literary career.

Erec is the initial work in which Chrétien begins to develop his ideal of aristocratic love within marriage. The idea would have seemed novel to his contemporaries. The lyric poetry of the troubadours expressed the desire of a young knight or minstrel for a lady who was either unmarried or married to another. Although the southern traditions were more sensual than the northern ones, the lady was presented as a remote, elevated, and usually unattainable figure. This ennobling and inspirational emotion was entirely foreign to the relationship between an aristocratic wife and her husband. Normally, she would have been given to him in a marriage arranged by her parents when she was about fourteen and he was a mature adult in his twenties. He was enjoined by church and law to exercise his authority over her person and property in a dominating and often brutal fashion.[49] She was enjoined to submit to his will in silent obedience. Even widows could be forced to remarry against their will for considerations of property. Idealized by the troubadours for her virtues and graces, condemned by the clerics for her frailties and wiles, the lady balanced her life by deferring to her husband and tolerating his infidelities, ordering her household, and raising her children. Chrétien was among the first to attempt to integrate her roles, so that, at least in literary fiction, a married woman might assert that her husband considered her to be both wife and lover. To Queen Eleanor of England and Countess Marie of Champagne, both married for dynastic reasons, and Marie to a much older man, love in marriage must have seemed a desirable but unattainable objective.[50]

While *Erec* reflects Chrétien's cherished ideal of courtly love within marriage, his treatment of it is unlike the one he used in his later romances. Erec is a bold and decisive prince who is haughty and aloof in manner and often brusque in speech. Attracted to Enide because of her great beauty and unconcerned about her poverty, he arranges with her father to marry her, without a word of

courtship. Enide in turn is elated by her future wealth and royal rank and equally attracted to her handsome suitor. No god of love with bow and arrow inspires feelings expressed in love monologues; they silently admire one another's physical beauty. As a maiden Enide is demure and silent, and Chrétien uses the mirror topos to describe her in vv. 440-441: "In her one saw oneself reflected / as if within a looking glass." She is a beautiful, quiet woman, on whom men project their feelings. Another reason why Erec does not court her is that it is inconceivable to him that his wishes could not be her own.[51] The marriage begins on that basis and on strong mutual physical attraction. *Erec* contains no scene in which a love-smitten hero is portrayed trembling in the heroine's presence in fear of rejection, which is a feature of the subsequent romances. On the contrary, particularly during her trials, Enide is portrayed as being in awe of her stern husband. Throughout the romance she addresses him in his hearing with the formal *vos* instead of the familiar form. She is mindful of the difference in age and rank and grateful for her elevation.

When Enide murmurs, "Oh, woe is you!" and ceases to reflect Erec's image of himself, the foundation of their marriage is shattered. Moreover, Enide cannot maintain her demure and quiet facade during the adventures she shares with Erec, even though he keeps admonishing her to be silent. Enide emerges as a skilled horsewoman who sets a fast pace. She is deceptive when she needs to be and resourceful in organizing their escape from Count Oringle. Her outbursts and loud lamentations reveal her highly emotional nature. Erec is less demonstrative and expresses his love through gifts: generous provision for Enide and her parents and bequests in memory of his father. Throughout the romance Enide shows herself to be devoted to Erec and unswervingly loyal. When Erec holds Enide in his arms by moonlight and says he loves her more than ever, he now loves her for herself. In turn, she accepts his decision to undertake the Joy of the Court without a word of apprehension or doubt. Her youthful character, not Erec's mature one, is developed most fully during the course of the romance.

In this romance Chrétien upholds a standard of moderation in matters of the heart. He portrays Erec as blameworthy for becoming so obsessed with his passion for his wife that he neglects his duties to society. He repeats this theme more symbolically in the "Joy of the Court," where he faults Enide's cousin for imprisoning her knightly lover within the enchanted orchard and isolating him

from society so she can keep him to herself. In later works, Chrétien portrays Sir Gawain as the knight who represents moderation, whereas the hero, particularly Lancelot, is prepared to sacrifice his social position, possessions, and reputation for love of the heroine. When Chrétien wrote *Yvain,* whose structure is similar to that of *Erec,* he developed his theme of courtly love in marriage from a different angle by creating a new husband so obsessed with his passion for winning glory at tournaments that he neglects his duties to his wife and becomes estranged from her. In *Erec* Chrétien creates an innovative model of an ideal marriage between a well-matched pair that begins with mutual love and prayers for an heir, overcomes estrangement, and culminates in a dual coronation.

THE MANUSCRIPT TRADITION

Erec and Enide is preserved in the following manuscripts:

Amsterdam, UB 466, fragment
Brussels, BR IV 837, fragment
Chantilly, Musée Condé, 472 (A)
London, BL, Harley 4971, excerpt
Paris, BN, fr. 375 (P)
Paris, BN, fr. 794 (C)
Paris, BN, fr. 1376 (B)
Paris, BN, fr. 1420 (E)
Paris, BN, fr. 1450 (H)
Paris, BN, fr. 24403 (V)
Paris, Bibl. Ste-Geneviève 1269, fragment
Private collection, Annonay fragments
Private collection, L'Aigle fragments[52]

This translation is based on BN, fr. 794, known as the Guiot copy, which was prepared in Provins in the thirteenth century.[53] It was edited by Mario Roques and published in the series of Les classiques français du moyen âge with the manuscript notes of Alexandre Micha. BN, fr.794, contains a unique digression about the gifts Enide bestows upon the monastery when Erec brings her home

as his bride, including a gold cross with a relic and a chasuble of gold silk embroidered by Morgan the Fay for her lover and obtained by Queen Guinevere for more pious wear (vv. 2323-2346 and 2349-2376). The translation contains variants of other manuscripts, including Enide's feeding a plover's wing to her sparrow hawk and rejoicing in her new bird and new lord (vv. 1300ff.) (BN, fr. 1376); a politer version of Erec's refusal to stay with the king in the forest more than one evening that, unlike BN, fr. 794, does not have Erec carry his brusqueness to the point of ordering the king about (vv. 4230ff.); a variant in which the knight being flogged by giants, not Erec, is in a perilous plight (v. 4322) (BN, fr. 1376; BN, fr. 1450); an interpolation when the flogged knight Cadoc of Cabruel asks Erec's name and is refused the information (vv. 4488ff.) (BN, fr. 1450); a short interpolation with Erec's description to Guivret of the final part of his escape from Count Oringle of Limors, with his wife on the neck of his war horse (vv. 5064ff.) (BN, fr. 1450); an expansion of a romantic interlude between Erec and Enide (vv. 5198ff.) (BN, fr. 1450); and an interpolation that ends the romance more smoothly by having the king dismiss the guests from the coronation feast with gifts (vv. 6881ff.) (BN, fr. 1450). These variants and interpolations are indicated by letters, so that the numbering of the verses of the translation corresponds to the numbering of BN, fr. 794.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

The original works of Chrétien de Troyes were written in Old French octosyllabic verse. Old French is a language that encompasses several dialects used between the ninth and late fifteenth centuries.[54] It retained from Latin a two-case declension system (subject/object) and flexible word order. It had not undergone the enrichment in vocabulary that occurred in the sixteenth century. Thus Chrétien expresses sophisticated ideas with a relatively limited choice of words. The verse form he chose, octosyllabic rhymed couplets, was an intrinsic part of his creative process. Verse shaped the expression of his thoughts, encouraged his wordplay, and established the forward movement of his poem. Verse allowed him to halt that movement for emphasis by repeating a key phrase without wearying his listeners by redundancy. Verse compensated for one of Chrétien's weaknesses, awkward abrupt transitions. Breaking the couplet or ending a passage with the

first verse of a rhymed couplet and beginning the next passage with the second verse of the couplet combined separation with linkage during the transition. Verse fixed the characters and episodes in the minds of listeners and readers, a method that has proved its effectiveness in the classroom. It is much more difficult to translate Chrétien's romances into verse than into prose, but there are benefits to rendering style as well as substance.

Erec is of particular interest because it is the earliest of Chrétien's Arthurian romances. The early works of a writer always interest readers of his masterpieces. Much of the genius of the mature works is foreshadowed by the early efforts, and they are the key to an analysis of the development of personal style. Erec contains no love monologues and shows little influence of the works of Ovid or the Tristan legend. The romance is expanded by detailed descriptions that show Chrétien's extraordinary power of observation. He is familiar with every detail of court life, from the arming of a knight to the dressing of a lady in new robes and from the courses served at a banquet to the ceremonial of a dual coronation. In descriptions of sumptuous eastern silks and brocades he is unsurpassed. Although his long lists of knights of the Round Table and wedding guests may have wearied his listeners, they are a valuable record of the contemporary literary status of the Arthurian legend. Chrétien's keen eye is more evident in the subsequent romances in the crisp and original images that bring a scene to life or communicate the inner thoughts of a character, but it is interesting to see his eye for detail in an earlier and more expansive stage of development. *Erec* shows how Chrétien learned to transform an adventure story into a literary masterpiece in the early stages of his road to perfection.

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EREC AND ENIDE

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PROLOGUE

IN proverb peasant folk maintain:
a thing you hold in deep disdain
is worth much more than you suspect;
it's wise to use your intellect,
as much or little was supplied,
for he who sets his wits aside
might know, while keeping taciturn,
a thing that proves a joy to learn.
So Chrétien de Troyes does say
that everyone, in every way,
must think and do all in his reach
so he may rightly speak and teach.
To illustrate what he advised,
a masterpiece he organized
from an adventure story shows
he who abandons what he knows
while God grants him intelligence
is foolish in such negligence.
The tale's of Erec, son of Lac,
which storytellers often hack
and ruin in their own accounts
when entertaining kings and counts.
I shall begin it now and tell
a tale to be remembered well
while Christendom shall yet abide,
so Chrétien asserts with pride.

THE HUNT OF THE WHITE STAG

IN spring, when Easter Day began,
in his walled town of Cardigan,
King Arthur held a lavish court,
with none more splendid to report.
He gathered many valiant knights,
tough, stalwart, feisty men in fights,
and maids and ladies, rich and fair,
kings' daughters, nobly born, were there.
The king, before the courtiers went,
informed his knights of his intent
to hunt the white stag, to restore
the custom of the days of yore.
To hear this royal proclamation
filled Sir Gawain with consternation.
He said: "Sire, this hunt would preclude
your ever winning gratitude.
The custom of the white male deer
to all of us has long been clear.
The custom of the hunt is this:
the slayer of the stag must kiss
the maid at court whom he selects
as fairest, come what may come next.
Great harm may come of it, I fear,
with some five hundred maidens here.
These maidens are of noble birth,
kings' daughters, wise and great in worth,
and not a one without a friend,
a bold brave knight, who will contend,
each speaking for himself, headstrong,
and whether he is right or wrong,
the maiden he has most desired
is loveliest and most admired."
"I know it well," the king replied,

"but will not put my plan aside,
for words a king has said aloud
ought never to be disavowed.
Tomorrow morning, with delight,
we all will hunt the stag that's white
within the forest of adventure;
this hunt will be a wondrous venture."
The hunt was organized this way
for sunrise the ensuing day,
and when next day the sun arose,
so did the king, who donned his clothes.
Within the forest he would fare
and chose a tunic coat to wear.
He had the knights aroused from slumber
and hunters saddled for their number,
with bows and arrows for the hunt.
The knights went in the woods in front.
The queen was next to mount and ride,
with one attendant at her side:
a maiden daughter of a king,
on her fine palfrey traveling.
A knight spurred after them and came,
and Erec was his given name,
a warrior of the Table Round,
at court extremely well renowned
throughout the time he had attended.
No other knight was thought as splendid.
He was so fair, in no land's lie
could one find fairer to the eye.
Brave, noble, not yet twenty-five,
no man of his same age alive
could equal him in valiancy.
When telling each good quality
I find words fail me in my need.
The knight was mounted on his steed;

with ermine was his cloak bedecked.
He galloped down the road unchecked.
His coat of flowered silk was noble
and fashioned in Constantinople.
He had on silken hosiery
well made and tailored fashionably.
In stirrups set and firm of hold,
his feet were clad in spurs of gold.
No arms or armor had the lord.
He carried nothing but his sword,
spurred round the corner of the street,
and found the queen he came to meet.
"If you please, lady, I shall ride
along this roadway at your side.
I'll keep you company and came
to join you with no other aim."
The queen told Erec gratefully:
"I do enjoy your company,
dear friend; you know that I speak true.
No better company than you."
They rode as swiftly as they could
and went directly in the wood.
The stag was started on his feet,
raised by the ones who led the meet.
Some blew the horns and some gave cry;
attacking, baying, running by,
the hounds pursued the fleeing stag;
the bowmen shot without a lag.
They all rode in King Arthur's train;
his hunter was a mount from Spain.
Queen Guinevere, in forest bounds,
was listening to hear the hounds.
By her were Erec and her maid,
who was so gracious and well made.
The ones who raised the stag, combined,

had left these three so far behind
that none of them could hear a sound
of horn, of hunter, and of hound.
To listen for a human word
or voice that could be overheard,
or hound that bayed within their hearing,
all three stood still within a clearing
and paused to wait beside a road.
A short time only had they slowed,
and then they saw a knight proceed,
approaching armed upon his steed.
His fist held lance; his neck bore shield.
The queen saw him from far afield.
A maiden rode, on his right side,
both beautiful and dignified.
In front, a dwarf came down the road
upon a good-sized nag he rode,
and in the dwarf's hand they could spot
a whip with thong ends in a knot.
Queen Guinevere beheld the sight
of this distinguished, handsome knight.
She wished to have made known to her
who both he and his maiden were.
She sent her maiden on her way
to speak with him without delay.
"Go forward, maiden," said the queen,
"to tell that riding knight I've seen
to come to me, and you must tell
the knight to bring his maid as well."
The maid approached him, riding straight
toward him paced at the amble gait.
The dwarf, whose hand with whip was laden,
advanced until he met the maiden.
The dwarf, abrim with spite and fault,
addressed the girl with: "Maiden, halt!

What are you seeking in this place?
You shan't proceed another pace."
"Dwarf, let me pass; I wish to speak
with yonder knight I came to seek,
for I was sent here by the queen."
The dwarf, extremely rude and mean,
stood in mid-road to interfere.
He said: "You have no business here.
Go back again, you have no right
to speak to such a splendid knight."
The maiden urged ahead her horse
to make her way past him by force,
because she thoroughly despised
the dwarf who was so undersized.
The dwarf, who saw she would encroach,
held up his whip at her approach.
Her face was what he aimed to hit;
she used her arm to cover it.
He took fresh aim, struck from above,
and dealt her hand, without a glove,
so hard a blow across the back,
it turned entirely blue and black.
The maid, with nowhere else to turn,
will she or no, had to return
and went back weeping from the road.
Down from the maiden's eyes there flowed
hot tears across her face in torrents.
The queen was filled with deep abhorrence
and did not know what to do next;
her maid was injured, she was vexed.
"Oh, dear friend Erec, I'm dismayed
about what happened to my maid.
That dwarf has done her injury.
That knight is filled with villainy
to have allowed that freakish churl

to lash out at that lovely girl.
My dear friend Erec, on your way;
tell him to come without delay,
because I do indeed intend
to meet him and his lady friend."
So Erec set spurs to his horse
and spurred ahead along that course;
he came directly toward the knight.
The wretched dwarf beheld the sight
and came toward Erec when he saw.
The dwarf said: "Vassal, now withdraw,
I do not know what you desire,
and I insist that you retire."
Said Erec in reply: "Be off,
despicable, provoking dwarf.
Let me go forward." "No, you won't."
"Yes, I shall do so." "No, you don't."
Then Erec pushed the dwarf aside.
Malevolence personified,
the dwarf gave Erec a hard slash
upon the neck with his cruel lash,
and Erec's face and neck were cleft
by furrows that this whipping left.
From end to end ran wale and welt
raised by the blow the whip thongs dealt.
He realized that he could not strike
the dwarf a blow as he would like;
he saw the knight's accoutrement,
great arrogance, and evil bent
and feared he promptly would be slain
were he to put his dwarf in pain.
Since folly is not fortitude,
so Erec was extremely shrewd,
for he withdrew and did no more.
"It's worse, my lady, than before.

That wretched dwarf, so vile and base,
has totally torn up my face.
I dared not strike or touch his frame,
but none should think it to my shame,
for I was totally unarmed
and feared the knight who's riding armed,
whose viciousness is manifest.
He would consider it no jest
and kill me in his insolence.
I'll pledge this much of consequence:
I shall seek vengeance, if I can,
or be an even lesser man.
Of no assistance will I find
my weapons, which are far behind.
I left them early in the day
at Cardigan and went away.
If I return in an endeavor
to seek my weapons, I may never
find him again when I give chase,
for he is riding off apace.
I must pursue the knight from here,
no matter whether far or near,
until I can find arms to rent
or borrow if they will be lent.
If someone's weapons can be spared,
the knight will find me well prepared
for battle, and you may be sure
our knightly combat will endure
the time required, however grim,
for him to beat me or I him.
If I can, one day past tomorrow
I shall return in joy or sorrow,
which of the two I cannot tell,
and you will see me where I dwell.

I can't stay longer at this site;
I'm leaving to pursue the knight,
to God I give you commendation."
The queen made such recommendation
to keep him safe from harm and crimes,
repeated some five hundred times.
So Erec left the queen and pressed
behind the knight without a rest.
Within the wood remained the queen.
There, by the king, the stag was seen.
The king was first to reach the site
of capture of the stag of white,
before the others who were near;
they slew and bore away the deer.
Then every woman, every man
returned and came to Cardigan.
At supper's end the nobles went
throughout the house, all well content.
The king, the custom being this,
announced he would bestow the kiss
(the deer was counted in his bag)
to keep the custom of the stag.
The court went into great uproar
as knights exchanged their oaths and swore
both ashen lance and sword they'd taste
before the kiss was ever placed.
By force of arms each lord would start
to prove the lady of his heart
within the hall had none her peer;
these words were ominous to hear.
When Sir Gawain heard how they vied,
be sure he was not gratified.
So he addressed King Arthur: "Sire,
your knights here are consumed with ire

and terribly perturbed by this.
They all are talking of this kiss
and say it shall not be bestowed
without some violent episode."
King Arthur answered sensibly:
"Gawain, fair nephew, counsel me.
My dignity must not be curbed;
I do not want the peace disturbed."
Some of the finest lords at court
took speedy counsel in support.
One counselor was King Yder,*
the first one summoned to appear,
and after him King Cadoalant,
so very wise and valiant.
Girflet and Kay were both brought in
together with King Amauguin,
and many lords whose rank was great
assembled to deliberate.
The queen came, as their talk commenced,
and told how she experienced
adventure in the wood of late.
She came before them to relate
the knight in armor she had seen,
the horrid dwarf so small and mean,
the whip with thongs the dwarf had used
to leave her maiden's bare hand bruised
and strike a blow to Erec's face
in that same ugly way and place,
how Erec had pursued the knight
to worsen or avenge the slight
and hoped that by the third day hence
he would be back in residence.
Said queen to king: "Sire, do see fit
to listen to me for a bit.
If all these barons will condone

my words, this kiss you should postpone
till Erec comes back in three days."
Throughout the court there were no nays;
the king himself gave his consent.

THE SPARROW HAWK

STILL Erec gave pursuit, intent
upon the knight who was equipped
and dwarf by whom he had been whipped,
until a castle came along,
well situated, fair, and strong.
They came directly through the gate.
The knights' and maidens' joy was great
within the castle, which was full
of maidens who were beautiful.
Some gave their molted falcons treats,
fed sparrow hawks out in the streets,
and some brought tercels on their walks
and molted goshawks, sorrel hawks,
while other town inhabitants
played dice and other games of chance;
some chess, some at backgammon tables.
The horses were outside the stables,
rubbed down and curried by the grooms.
The ladies primped within their rooms.
On seeing the approaching knight,
whom everybody knew on sight,
with dwarf and maid for company,
they went to greet him three by three.
By everyone the knight was hailed,
whereas for Erec greetings failed;
they gave the stranger no salute.
Still Erec stayed in hot pursuit.

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On through the town he made his way
till he saw where the knight would stay.
Delight and joy crossed Erec's face
to see him find a lodging place.
Then Erec rode a bit from there
and saw, reclining on a stair,
a vavasor in years mature,*
and yet his court was very poor.
He was distinguished, white of hair,
with a straightforward, noble air.
He sat in total solitude
and, in appearance, seemed to brood.
Thus, Erec thought him of good will
and quick to be hospitable
and sought the courtyard through the gate.
The vavasor, considerate,
ran up and greetings he conferred
though Erec had not said one word.
"Be welcome, good sir," he declared.
"You see my lodging is prepared,
if you will deign to lodge inside."
"Thank you," said Erec and replied:
"I came here in no other case;
tonight I need a lodging place."
Then he dismounted, and the lord
in person took the bridle cord
and led the charger off to rest,
rejoicing greatly at his guest.
The vavasor called his wife there
and daughter, wonderfully fair,
both in a workroom occupied,
whatever were the tasks they plied.
The lady came forth, as required.
Her daughter came as well, attired
in a fine, ample, white chemise

that fell in pleats below her knees;
above she wore a long white dress
and had no more to wear or less.
This garment was so old and worn
that at the elbows holes were torn,
poor outer clothing and disdained,
but fair the body it contained.
She was exquisitely refined,
for Nature, when she had designed
the maiden, had used all her skill.
How she made one so beautiful
but once and no more, Nature wondered
at many times, more than five hundred,
for Nature could not so endeavor
subsequently that she could ever
in any fashion reproduce
her pattern for another use.
Let Nature vouch the world around
no fairer creature could be found.
Her beauty was beyond compare.
I tell you true, Isolde the Fair*
was not so golden bright of curl
as were the tresses of this girl.
Her face, more delicately white
than any lily flower, was bright
with a fresh crimson hue, a shade
bestowed by Nature on the maid
so it would marvelously grace
the whiteness of her brow and face.
Her eyes were so spectacular,
each shone as brightly as a star.
God never knew how to devise
a finer nose or mouth or eyes.
What can I tell you of her beauty?
To gaze upon her seemed a duty,

for she was made to be inspected;
in her one saw oneself reflected
as if within a looking glass.
Out of the workroom came the lass.
When she cast eyes upon the knight,
who never had been in her sight,
the maid drew back a little bit,
not knowing who was opposite,
and blushed red with embarrassment,
while Erec felt astonishment
to see such loveliness appear.
The lord told her: "Sweet daughter dear,
please take this horse, which you must lead
out to the stable; place the steed
with my own horses in his stall;
let nothing lack for him at all;
take saddle, bridle off straightway,
and after give him oats and hay
and curry him and brush him well,
so he will be presentable."
So, in her care the horse was placed.
The charger's breast strap she unlaced
and saddle, bridle both removed.
Fine hostess to the horse she proved;
her expert handling did not falter.
Around his neck she threw a halter;
when he had been rubbed down and curried,
she tied him to a manger, hurried
for hay and oats for him to eat,
placed them before him, fresh and sweet,
and sought her father as before.
"Dear daughter," said the vavasor,
"Take this lord's hand and lead him hence,
and show him greatest reverence."
The maid did so without delay;

she took the guest's hand right away,
because she was not impolite,
and up the stairs she led the knight.
Preceding them, the noble's spouse
made preparations in the house.
She had laid out on all the beds
embroidered quilts and costly spreads;
thus seats for all three were supplied.
The maid was placed at Erec's side;
the vavasor sat opposite.
Close by, a blazing fire was lit.
No servant had the vavasor
but one manservant and no more,
no chambermaid or kitchen maid.
His man, out in the kitchen, made
the meat and fowl for supper fare,
and he did skillfully prepare
a speedy dinner for the host,
with meat to boil and meat to roast.
When he had readied their repast
as they had ordered it, he passed
two basins full of washing water
to guest and lady, lord and daughter.
They sat at tables, swiftly laid
with dishes on a cloth arrayed;
they had as much as they desired
of everything that they required.
When they had eaten as they chose,
and from the tables they arose,
then Erec posed some questions, telling
his host and master of the dwelling:
"My gracious host, would you explain
why your own daughter's clothes are plain?
Why dress in poor and ugly guise
a girl so beautiful and wise?"

"Dear friend," replied the vavasor,
"To many poverty is sore,
and poverty has injured me.
It grieves me very much to see
my daughter wearing clothes so poor,
a state I lack the power to cure.
My life has always been war-tossed,
and all my land is sold or lost,
or else encumbered by a lien.
Yet how well clad she would have been,
had I allowed and had she kept
what people hoped she would accept.
The lord who owns this castled town
would give her many a fine gown
and do her favors beyond count;
she is his niece, and he a count.
No lord, though held in high esteem
throughout this land, would fail to deem
she was a worthy bride to choose,
if only I did not refuse;
but I await a greater honor,
would God bestow such glory on her,
that she be sent by providence
some king or count to take her hence.
No count or king the heavens frame
would view my daughter's hand with shame;
her beauty's of such wondrous kind,
what bride her equal could one find?
Though she is lovely, what I prize
above her beauty: she is wise;
the Lord has never made her peer
in wisdom or in heart sincere.
When with my daughter, I don't care
a marble for the world out there.
She is my pleasure and my toy;

she is my comfort and my joy;
she is my wealth; she is my treasure;
my love for her exceeds all measure."
Once Erec listened, much engrossed,
to all recounted by his host,
he asked this question of the lord:
from where came all the knights who poured
inside the walled and castled town?
The streets, however tumbledown,
were filled with knights till they were jammed;
each humble lodging place was crammed
with knights, squires, ladies, to the rim.
The vavasor explained to him:
"My friend, the barons here abound
from both this land and lands around.
The young and gray of hair are all
attending a great festival
the town tomorrow will enact,
which makes the lodging places packed.
Tomorrow with them all amassed
there'll be a very noisy blast,
because, as all the people flock,
a very lovely sparrow hawk
will sit upon a silver perch,
the best hawk for which one could search;
some five, six moltings* have occurred.
The man who wants to have the bird
must have a lady fair of face,
discreet and wise, in nothing base,
and if there is a knight so bold
that he is willing to uphold
the merits of the loveliest,
he has his love, before the rest,
approach the perch and lift the bird,
if she can do so undeterred.

So to this custom they adhere
and gather for it every year."
Then Erec spoke up to inquire:
"Good host, I would not cause you ire,
but if you know it, tell to me
an armored knight's identity
with weapons blue and gold of hue.
Not long ago here he came through,
and very close by at his side
a charming maid is seen to ride;
a hunchbacked dwarf goes on ahead."
To which the host replied and said:
"That knight will have the sparrow hawk;
no other knight would dare to balk,
and there will be no wounds or blows.
I think nobody would oppose.
Two years the sparrow hawk he's won
and had no challenges, not one.
But if he wins it once again,
the hawk becomes his to retain;
his right to it none will refute;
he'll keep the hawk without dispute."
Then Erec told his host outright:
"I have no liking for that knight.
Were armor not my stumbling block,
I'd challenge him about that hawk.
Host, out of your fairmindedness
and as a boon and kindliness,
give me your counsel as a guide.
Advise me how to be supplied
with armor, ugly gear or fair,
or old or new, I do not care."
The host responded, generous:
"The lack will not be onerous,
for I have armor, fair and fine,

and I shall gladly lend you mine.
Among five hundred coats of mail
my triple-link coat did prevail.
Expensive, fine greaves will be furnished,
lightweight but sturdy and well burnished,
a good and handsome helmet too,
and shield that is both fresh and new.
I'll lend you horse and sword and lance,
and I would never look askance.
All you might ask I shall confer."
"Indeed, I thank you, my dear sir,
however, I could not have sought
a better sword than I have brought
or any other horse than mine,
for his assistance will be fine.
If you will lend me all the rest,
I'll think I have been greatly blessed.
But I shall ask you to dispense
another boon, with recompense,*
if God will let me go away
with all the honors of the fray."
The vavasor said graciously:
"Ask what you will with surety
of what is mine, I shall not balk."
He would defend the sparrow hawk,
said Erec, in his daughter's name.
No maiden present there could claim
to be one-hundredth part as fair.
Were Erec to escort her there,
he would have clear entitlement
both to maintain at the event
and prove to any adversary
the sparrow hawk was hers to carry.
"Sir, it is not yet manifest
whom you have sheltered as your guest,

of what estate and kin I spring.
I'm son to a strong, wealthy king.
King Lac's the father whom I claim,
and Erec is my Breton name.*
King Arthur's court contains my peers;
I have been with him three full years.
I do not know if any word
within this land was ever heard
about my father or of me,
but I shall promise and agree,
if you give me your arms to wear
and place your daughter in my care
tomorrow when the hawk is won,
if God will make me champion,
once I have victory in hand,
I'll take your daughter to my land,
where I shall have her wearing crowns;
she will be queen of ten large towns."
"Oh, my dear sir, can it be true
that Erec, son of Lac, is you?"
"Yes, I am he," he verified.
Then Erec's joyful host replied:
"I have heard tell of you before;
I love and prize you all the more,
for you are very brave and bold.
There's nothing that I shall withhold,
and faithfully, as you have sought her,
I give to you my lovely daughter."
Then with his hand he reached for hers.
"Here," he announced, "I make her yours."
Erec received her, very glad,
for what he wanted now he had.
In all joy was predominant.
The father felt most jubilant;
great tears of joy the mother wept,

completely still the maiden kept,
with silent joy she was abrim
that she was granted thus to him.
a fine, bold man for marrying,
and she well knew he would be king,
and she herself would be renowned
and as a rich queen would be crowned.
They sat up very late that night.
The beds were made, with sheets of white
and mattresses for soft repose.
Their conversation reached its close,
and merrily to bed all pressed.
That evening Erec had scant rest.
Next morning, when the dawn first broke,
he got up swiftly when he woke.
His host rose with him on that day;
they went to church so they could pray.
A hermit, told they wished to hear it,
intoned the mass called Holy Spirit;
the offering they did not neglect.
Mass heard, they went to genuflect
before the altar, bent the knee,
and went back to the hostelry.
With zest for battle, Erec sought
his armor, which the people brought.
The maiden helped the knight to arm
and cast no spell and used no charm.*
She laced his iron greaves and tied
the pair with thongs of cut deer hide,
put on his hauberk of strong mail,
and did the lace on his ventail.*
The shining helm on him she put
and armed him well from head to foot.
His sword she fastened to his side
and had his horse brought out to ride,

and when they did as they were bound,
he sprang upon it from the ground.
The maiden brought along the shield
and then the lance, one stiff to wield.
She passed the shield; its strap he flung
around his neck, from where it hung.
The lance to fist she put in place,
and Erec grasped it near the base.
"My good sir, if you will allow,
please make your daughter ready now,"
he told the lord who was so kind.
"I wish to take her now to find
the sparrow hawk, as we agreed."
The vavasor arranged with speed
to have a palfrey brought, a bay,
and saddled up without delay.
No talk of harness can there be.
The vavasor's great poverty
explains why talk is not permitted.
So saddle, bridle both were fitted.
The maid got on, with unbound hair,
who did not have a cloak to wear.
She was most willing to obey.
But Erec brooked no more delay;
he took the lead upon that ride,
his good host's daughter at his side,
and after, with the pair before,
the lady and the vavasor.
Then Erec rode with upraised lance,
by him, the maid of elegance,
and they were watched by one and all
within the streets, both great and small.
All people marveled at the sight.
"Who can he be, who is this knight?"
To one another people told:

"He must be very proud and bold
to be escorting this fair maid.
His efforts will be well repaid,
and he can rightfully contest
this maiden is the loveliest."
One to another said in talk:
"She ought to have the sparrow hawk."
Some watched the maiden, whom they praised,
and many people asked, amazed:
"Good Lord, whoever is this knight
who leads the fair maid at his right?"
"Who knows, who knows," each one would tell.
"His shining helm becomes him well,
as do his hauberk and his shield
and sharp steel blade he has to wield.
He is well seated on his mount
and seems a vassal of account,
a valiant and well-built athlete
with well-formed arms and legs and feet."
All people watched them as they rode;
the couple neither paused nor slowed
until they reached the sparrow hawk.
Then, for the knight they came to stalk,
the couple waited at one side.
Eventually their group espied
the knight approaching, who conveyed
his dwarfling with him and his maid.
This knight, who had already heard
a knight had come who sought the bird,
did not believe the world could hold
a knight who was so very bold
that he would deal him any blow.
He'd conquer him and bring him low.
This knight was one of high repute,
well known to all, had all's salute.

They formed a noisy crowd behind
of knights and men-at-arms combined
with ladies and with maids, who raced
behind him in tremendous haste.
The knight rode, heading this parade,
accompanied by his dwarf and maid,
straight toward the hawk, his manner proud.
There was a rough and vulgar crowd
of common folk who came to gawk
and press around the sparrow hawk.
This vulgar crowd did not permit
a man in crossbow's range of it.
The count, now he had reached the place,
warned off the peasant populace.
He held a whip within his hand,
and backward drew the churlish band.
The knight continued on ahead
and to his maiden calmly said:
"This sparrow hawk, mademoiselle,
so beautiful and molted well,
is justly your prerogative.
It shall be yours while I shall live,
for you are beautiful and fine.
Go forward now, sweet friend of mine,
and take the hawk down from its perch."
The maiden's hand reached out in search,
which Erec ran up to contest.
Such boldness left him unimpressed.
Then Erec made his challenge heard.
"Back, maid! Play with another bird;
to this you have no rightful claim.
Whoever's anger I inflame,
this sparrow hawk shall not be yours;
a better maiden claims it hers,
more beautiful and courteous."

The other knight was furious,
but Erec did not look askance.
He told his maiden to advance.
"My lovely one, go undeterred,
and from the perch remove the bird,
which, rightfully, is yours instead.
Go forward, maiden, go ahead.
If anybody dares step out,
I boast that I shall win the bout.
You aren't surpassed by anyone—
the moon cannot outshine the sun—
in merit, or in loveliness,
in honor or in nobleness."
The other could no longer stand
to hear how bravely Erec planned
to challenge anyone to fight.
"Who are you, vassal," asked the knight,
"who have forbidden me the hawk?"
So Erec answered, bold in talk:
"A knight from other lands than these.
No matter whom it may displease,
this maiden rightfully may claim
this sparrow hawk for which I came."
"Get back!" the other knight said. "Never!
You came on an insane endeavor.
If you would have this bird of prey,
you will have quite a price to pay."
"Pay, vassal? How? What shall I render?"
"If you're unwilling to surrender
the hawk to me, we shall do battle."
"What foolishness I hear you prattle,"
responded Erec. "To my mind
your threats are of the empty kind.
I do not fear you anyhow."
"I'm challenging you here and now,

for you will have to fight for it."
And Erec said, "May God see fit!
What better thing could you propose?"
Soon you will hear them come to blows.
The spacious jousting place was cleared;
on all sides spectators appeared.
One acre's distance they withdrew,
then spurred their steeds, and off they flew.
They sought each other with lance tips
and struck so hard their shields had rips;
the surfaces were pierced and hacked;
their lances split apart and cracked.
The saddlebows were ruined things;
they could not keep to stirrup rings;
upon the ground the two were thrown;
the steeds flew down the field alone.
The knights sprang up and took their stance.
Though they were not devoid of lance,
from scabbard each knight drew his blade;
with viciousness their swords were played.
The slicing blows that each knight slung
crushed in the helms as they were rung.
In fiercest play the sword blades clashed,
and both the knights were struck and bashed.
No aspect of this fight was feigned;
they broke whatever they attained,
sliced shields and hauberks with each thud
as swords turned crimson with their blood.
Their combat lasted for so long,
with blows so rapid and so strong,
that over them exhaustion swept.
Both maidens sorrowfully wept,
and each knight saw the way his maid
wept, stretched her hands to God, and prayed
that victory He would confer

upon the one who fought for her.
The knight who was the favorite
said, "Sir, let us draw back a bit.
Some breathing spell we need to seek;
we're striking blows that are too weak
and ought to deal much better blows,
for day is drawing to a close.
To have our duel last this long
is a disgrace and very wrong;
we are supposed to use steel blades
defending our beloved maids."
Said Erec, "You have spoken well."
The two knights rested for a spell.
As Erec looked upon his choice,
who prayed for him with lowered voice,
the very sight of her he found
made all his energy rebound.
Due to her love and beauty merged,
his great courageousness resurged.
Then he recalled the queen, his claim
within the forest that his shame
would be avenged and thus effaced,
or he was even more disgraced.
"Oh, wretch, what am I waiting for?
The injury this warrior
permitted and his dwarf imposed
is unavenged and unopposed."
His indignation was renewed,
and in a voice with wrath imbued
he shouted, "Vassal, fight anew!
To battle I resummon you!
We have enjoyed too much repose;
let's recommence exchanging blows."
The knight said, "I can find no fault."
So they resumed their fierce assault.

They both well knew the way to fence;
except for Erec's good defense
against the knight, with upraised arm,
the first lunge would have done him harm.
The knight reached over shield and hit
the helm and cut a piece from it.
The blow that he dealt Erec gave
the white skullcap a close, close shave.
The sword continued downward, split
the shield down to the boss, and slit
and cut mail more than one span wide
from Erec's hauberk, at the side.
Stunned, Erec felt cold steel cut mesh
above the thigh and into flesh.
At this time he was God-protected,
for if the sword had not deflected
from where the knight had taken aim,
it would have sliced through Erec's frame.
But Erec did not feel dismayed.
What his foe gave him he repaid,
and he attacked him all the bolder.
He struck the knight upon the shoulder.
The blow he struck was mighty, sure,
and one the shield could not endure.
The hauberk's uselessness was shown,
because the sword cut through to bone.
The red blood from the blow he placed
flowed to the belt around the waist.
Both vassals were extremely fierce.
In skill at combat they were peers,
and neither won a foot of land
from where the other took his stand.
Their hauberk's mail had tears and rents.
Their shields were filled with holes and dents
so not enough shield could be seen,

in truth, to serve the knights as screen;
they battled on without a shield.
Each knight had had the time to yield
much blood and had grown weak of limb.
The knight struck Erec, Erec him,
then Erec landed such a blow
to helmet that he stunned his foe.
Unhindered, Erec struck him twice;
by these successive blows struck twice
the helmet was completely split.
Down to the coif the sword blade bit;
through coif to head it cut unstopped;
and from the skull a bone was lopped,
although the brain escaped the blade.
The knight was stumbling and swayed,
and Erec shoved and made him slide
and fall to earth on his right side.
Then Erec grabbed him, helmeted,
and tore the helmet off his head,
and he undid the ventail's lace,
so he disarmed his head and face.
Recalling how he'd been affronted
within the wood when he confronted
the dwarf, he would have had his head.
For mercy the knight begged and pled.
"Oh, mercy, sir! In my defeat
please do not kill me, I entreat!
You've won me as your prisoner,
but as my executioner
you would not be esteemed or prized;
your cruelty would be despised.
Instead, accept this sword of mine."
But Erec said he would decline:
"You'll be in luck if I don't kill."
"Oh, noble knight, be merciful.

What injury or what offense
makes your hate deadly and intense?
For to my knowledge I have never
seen you before, nor did I ever
cause injury or shame to you."
Then Erec said, "That is untrue."
"Alas, sir, you must tell me so.
I've never seen you that I know.
Upon your mercy I shall be
if I have done you injury."
"When I was with Queen Guinevere
within the forest and drew near
your party yesterday," he said,
"sir, you permitted your ill-bred,
vile dwarf to strike her maiden's face.
To strike a woman's a disgrace.
He struck me once he'd struck the girl
and treated me like some low churl.
You did outrageously, in fact,
to witness that outrageous act.
You let it happen with delight
when such a monstrous little mite
struck at the maiden and at me.
I hate you for it rightfully;
it was egregious to endure.
You have become my prisoner;
without delaying you will go
straight to my lady, who, I know,
unfailingly is to be found
at Cardigan, where you are bound
and will be by the close of day;
it's less than seven leagues away.
There you will place within her hands,
to do whatever she commands,
yourself, your dwarfling, and your maid.

This message is to be conveyed:
tomorrow I come joyfully,
and I shall bring a maid with me,
so wise, so virtuous, so fair,
she has no equal anywhere,
as you can truthfully proclaim.
Now I should like to know your name."
The knight said, willingly or not,
"My lord, Yder, the son of Nut.
This morning I would not have known
one knight, by force of arms alone,
who could beat me, but in our bout
I found one whom I've sounded out.
You are a very valiant knight.
Receive my word; I vow outright
that no delay shall intervene:
I shall surrender to the queen.
But you must tell, and not conceal,
what name they call you and reveal
by whom I am to be bestowed,
for I am ready for the road."
He answered him, "So I shall do;
I'll not conceal my name from you:
it's Erec. Go and make it known
I'm sending you to be her own."
"I'll keep my promise and be off
to place myself, my maid, my dwarf,
all at her mercy, out and out,
so you need have no fear or doubt
that news to her will be conveyed
about you and about your maid."
With Erec's will Yder concurred;
all came to hear him pledge his word:
the count, the folk of the environs,
the maids, together with the barons.

Some were downcast, some overjoyed,
some pleased, some sorry and annoyed.
But most were filled with joyfulness
about the maid in her white dress,
kind-hearted and superior,
the daughter of the vavasor,
though some were sorry for Yder
and for his maid, whom they held dear.
Yder would stay no longer now;
he had to leave to keep his vow.
At once he got upon his mount.
Why should I give a long account?
His maid and dwarf were in his train;
they traveled over wood and plain
and down the whole straight road that ran
to take them into Cardigan.
The lord Gawain and seneschal
Kay were together by the hall
in galleries, with other lords
who had assembled there in hordes,
or so I find that it appears.
The three were sighted by these peers.
The steward, who beheld them first,
told Sir Gawain as they conversed:
"Sir, in my heart I do believe
that mounted lord we now perceive
is that same man the queen did say
left her in outrage yesterday.
I think their party numbers three;
the dwarf and maiden I can see."
"That's true," replied the lord Gawain,
"here comes a dwarf within his train
and maiden; and their way is straight
in our direction as we wait.
He's fully armed, although in fact

the shield he bears is not intact.
Now, if the queen could see this knight,
I think she would know him on sight.
Say, seneschal, give her a call!"
At once, off went the seneschal
and found the queen within a room.
"Do you recall the dwarf toward whom
you felt such anger and dismay,
who hurt your maiden yesterday?"
"Yes, steward, I recall him well.
Do you know anything to tell?
Why bring that incident to mind?"
"My lady, I looked out to find
an errant knight who comes our way
in armor, on a steed of gray,
and, if my eyesight is not dim,
the rider has a maid with him,
and I believe their fellowship
includes a dwarf who holds a whip
and who dealt Erec that hard blow."
The queen arose and said, "Let's go.
Come, seneschal, and we shall see
if that approaching knight is he.
If it is he, I promise you
I shall confirm that it is true
the very moment I have seen."
"I'll take you there," Kay told the queen.
"Come up into the gallery,
where our companions are, to see.
We see him coming with his train.
My lady, even Sir Gawain
is waiting for you; let us go.
We've waited too long here below."
The queen climbed up the staircase, went
to windows after her ascent,

and stood beside the lord Gawain.
The knight's identity was plain.
"Ha!" said the queen, "he is the stranger.
The knight has been in greatest danger.
He was in combat. I don't know
if Erec has avenged his woe
or if this knight made Erec yield,
but many blows have struck his shield,
and on his hauberk blood was shed;
much of its shining mail is red."
"How true," was Sir Gawain's reply,
"in no way, lady, do you lie.
I'm sure that will be ascertained,
because his hauberk is bloodstained
from battering in some onslaught.
It clearly seems that he has fought,
and we can tell with certitude
how fierce a battle has ensued.
We'll soon hear news and be annoyed
or otherwise be overjoyed:
does Erec send him here, your own,
a captive on your mercy thrown,
or does he come vainglorious
to utter some wild boasts to us
that he made Erec die or lose?
I doubt that he has other news."
The queen replied, "My thoughts indeed."
"That may well be," they all agreed.
Yder came riding through the gate,
who bore the news of Erec's fate.
All came down from the gallery
and went to meet their company.
Yder came to the mounting block,
dismounting on that piece of rock.
Gawain reached upward for the maid,

so she dismounted with his aid.
Apart, the dwarf got off his mount.
More than one hundred knights, by count,
led in the three, on their descent.
Before the king the party went.
The moment that Yder had seen,
he went directly to the queen,
first greeted her and next the king
and all the knightly gathering.
"A man of noble character
has sent me here your prisoner,
a knight, bold-spirited and strong,
whose face was smarting from the thong
in my dwarf's whipstock yesterday.
He overcame me in a fray.
My lady, I bring dwarf and maid,
all at your mercy here conveyed;
to do whatever is your will."
No longer would the queen keep still,
and after Erec she inquired.
"Tell, if you know, sir," she required,
"the time when Erec will appear."
"Tomorrow, lady, bringing here
a maid with him who has been shown
the loveliest I've ever known."
He gave his message as assigned;
the queen was sensible and kind
and told him courteously: "My friend,
since you're my prisoner, I intend
to set the lightest penalty.
I would not do you injury,
but tell me now how you are named,
so help you Heaven." He proclaimed,
"Yder, my lady, son of Nut."
The truth was perfectly clear-cut.

Thereon the queen arose straightway
and went before the king to say:
"Sire, now you see that you did right
to wait until the valiant knight
named Erec could at last be found.
My counsel yesterday was sound:
it would be best if you delayed.
Good counsel ought to be obeyed."
"No fable," said the king, "but fact;
the words you've spoken are exact.
He is no fool who takes advice;
yours yesterday has proved precise.
But if you love me in the least,
proclaim this knight may be released
on the condition I exhort:
he joins my household and my court
and stays within this house of mine.
The worse for him, should he decline."
The king had spoken; when he ceased,
the queen immediately released
the knight and ended his submission,
but stipulated the condition
at future he remain at court.
The prompting needed was quite short
before he pledged he would remain.
He joined the court and household train,
and he had scarcely entered there
when young men ran up to prepare
to take arms off the warrior.

OF Erec we must speak once more,
still situated at the site
where he had battled with the knight.
There has not been such joy the while
since Tristan, on Saint Samson's Isle,
brought vicious Morholt to defeat
as there was over Erec's feat.
Both great and small, they sang his glory;
both thin and fat were laudatory.
They all admired his valiancy.
Each knight said, "Lord, how brave is he,
all under heaven are excelled!"
Next Erec went back where he dwelled.
With words of high praise he was graced,
and by the count himself embraced,
who was in greatest ecstasies.
The count declared: "Sir, if you please,
you are the son of Lac the king,
a guest I should be sheltering
as my own rightful obligation.
If you accept my invitation,
you would enhance my own prestige,
for I consider you my liege.
Good sir, if you will heed my pleas,
take lodging with me, if you please."
Said Erec, "No, I shall not leave
my host tonight, and do not grieve.
I'm deeply honored he presents
his daughter to me and consents.
What would you call that, sir, at present?
A beautiful and lavish present?"
"Yes, my good sir," replied the count,
"a splendid gift of great account.

The maid is lovely, wise, and fine,
and of a very noble line.
My heart's rejoicing will not cease
that you have deigned to take my niece
(know that her mother is my sister).
Once more I beg and I insist, sir,
this evening you should lodge with me."
But Erec answered, "Let me be,
for I shall not, no way indeed."
Because it was no use to plead,
the count said, "Sir, as you see fit,
and we shall say no more of it,
however I and every knight
I have will be with you tonight
for fellowship among our ranks."
When Erec heard, he gave him thanks
and toward his host began to ride;
the count rode with him at his side.
The vavasor rejoiced to share
his home with knights and ladies there.
As soon as Erec reached his door,
some twenty men-at-arms or more
ran to remove his arms with zeal.
All people in that house could feel
and see their joy was now complete.
First Erec came and took his seat.
On cushions, beds, or benches flanked,
all others sat as they were ranked.
Alongside Erec there were placed
the count and maid who was so graced.
a She fed a plover's wing from fist
b to sparrow hawk upon her wrist,
c for which the battle had been done.
d Upon that day the maid had won
e joy, honor, and a lordly part.

She was rejoicing in her heart; f
both bird and lord did so elate her, g
the maiden's joy could not be greater, h
and so her countenance revealed. i
She did not keep her joy concealed. j
All knew and saw; the house displayed k
great joy for love of this young maid. l
Then Erec called the nobleman 1303
to hear a speech that he began.
His words, fair and well chosen, were:
"My good friend, my good host, good sir:
to me great honor you've accorded,
but richly you will be rewarded.
Tomorrow morning I escort
your daughter to King Arthur's court, 1310
for that is where I wish to marry.
If but a short time you will tarry,
I'll send for you, because I've planned
to have you taken to my land.
My father holds it; after, I.
It's far from here and not nearby.
There I shall give you towns, a pair
most fine, most prosperous, most fair.
You will be lord of Roadan,
built during Adam's lifetime span, 1320
and of a town that's close by it
and is not lesser by a whit:
the people call it Montrevel.
My sire's no fairer citadel.
Before three full days have been spent,
in great profusion I'll have sent
silver and gold, gray fur and vair,*
and silken fabrics, costly, rare,
to clothe you and your wife, your fine,
sweet-tempered lady, also mine. 1330

Tomorrow at the break of day,
as she is dressed in this array,
to court I shall convey your daughter.
When I arrive there and have brought her,
I want my lady queen's attire
to be her own, as I desire:
a silken dress of crimson dye."
A maid sat on a bench nearby,
most wise, most worthy, most polite,
1340 beside the maiden dressed in white.
She was the count's niece equally,
1342 her cousin in the first degree.
a When she had heard that Erec chose
b to have her cousin wear her clothes
c that were so shabby and so mean
d and take her to the court and queen,
1343 she told the count: "It's deep disgrace,
and, more than others' in this place,
your own prestige would most decrease,
if this lord were to take your niece
away with him so poorly clad.
Her dress is miserably bad."
The count responded, "I implore,
1350 my sweet niece, give her of your store
of garments in which you are dressed
the one that you consider best."
But Erec, when he overheard,
replied, "Sir, not another word,
for you must understand one thing:
I do not want, for anything,
another dress for her unless
the queen has given her a dress."
The maid heard what he specified.
1360 "Aha! my good sir," she replied,
"since you would take my cousin off

in clothing that she may not doff,
in her white garment and her shift,
I wish to give another gift.
Since you inflexibly oppose
her having any of my clothes,
I have three palfreys, very fine.
No king's or count's surpasses mine;
no better palfreys could be spotted.
One is a sorrel, one is spotted,
one black of coat with white forefeet.
True, were a hundred to compete,
the dappled could not be surpassed;
birds of the air don't fly as fast.
It can be ridden by a child;
fit for a maiden young and mild,
not skittish, balky, not a biter,
and not a kicker or a fighter.
Who seeks a better has no taste,
and it is very gently paced.
When it is walking, its feet float;
a smoother ride than in a boat."
"Sweet friend," said Erec in his turn,
"this gift is one I shall not spurn
and one I hope that she will choose;
I do not want her to refuse."
The maiden instantly began
to call her trusted serving man
and told him: "Friend, go and prepare
my palfrey with the dappled hair
and fetch it saddled without idling."
He did the saddling and the bridling,
prepared the horse, at her behest,
worked hard to make it look its best
(its mane and tail had flowing hair),
got on, and brought the palfrey there.

When Erec saw the palfrey come,
he praised it to the maximum;
its form seemed fair, its temper stable.
He sent a servant to the stable.
The palfrey he commanded tied
with his own charger, at its side.
Then everyone began to leave.
They spent a very joyful eve.
The count returned to his own door,
left Erec with the vavasor,
and promised him he would escort
his party when he left for court.
They all slept soundly through that night.
Next morning, when the dawn was bright,
as Erec readied to proceed,
he ordered saddles on each steed.
He roused his lovely friend from rest,
and she prepared herself and dressed.
The vavasor and wife arose,
and every knight and lady chose
to get prepared to leave the site
and mount and ride with maid and knight.
The count was last of all to mount.
So Erec rode beside the count,
and, riding at his side, he set
his fair friend, who did not forget
her sparrow hawk, with which she played,
the only riches she conveyed.
In company their joy was great.
When came the time to separate,
the count, with generosity,
had some knights in his company
he wished to send with Erec hence
to win him greater deference,
but Erec said none should remain;

he wished no others in his train
as he went forth except his friend.
"You all to God I now commend."
They rode with him a lengthy piece.
The count kissed Erec and his niece,
committing them to God of grace.
Her parents gave her their embrace;
her father and her mother kept
no tears back: kissing her, they wept.
So, as the time of parting nears,
maid, mother, father are in tears,
for such is natural emotion
and love and filial devotion.
Their tears were from the sympathy
and tenderness and amity
in which they held their child so dear,
although the parents could see clear
that greatest honors would redound
to them from where their child was bound.
From love and sympathy they cried
at parting from their daughter's side
but not for any other thing.
They knew what honors it would bring
to them both in the longer run.
They left in tears, commending one
another, weeping, to God's grace.
Not tarrying, they left the place.
Then Erec left his host behind,
extremely eager in his mind
to reach the king's court, overjoyed
by this adventure he'd enjoyed.
This venture caused him to rejoice,
with such a beauty as his choice,
and charming, courteous, and wise.
He could not take away his eyes.

The more he looked, the more his bliss.
He had to give the maid a kiss.
As he pressed close to her, he viewed
the maid and thereby felt renewed.
He looked upon her hair's blond sheen,
her laughing eyes, her brow serene,
her nose and face and mouth, each part,
and tenderness engulfed his heart.
He gazed at her down to the hip;
from chin and white throat he let slip
his eyes to waist, side, arm, and hand.
The maiden also had not scanned
the knight the less in any part,
with great good will and loyal heart,
as if competing with the lord.
They'd not have ceased for a reward
to view each other and to watch,
for they were equal and a match
in handsomeness, nobility,
attractiveness, and courtesy.
He was so similar to her
in manners and in character,
no one who saw them both would care
to say or choose which of the pair
had more discretion or appeal.
They were alike in how they feel
and were exceedingly well suited;
the other's heart each one has looted.
Two images of grace and carriage;
none such were joined by law and marriage.
They rode together and began
to reach the town of Cardigan
where, at high noon, they came in view,
as people waited for the two.
At court the finest barons went

up to the windows, where they meant
to sight the pair. When that was done,
Queen Guinevere came at a run;
the king himself came straightaway,
and Perceval of Wales* and Kay,
and after Sir Gawain did press,
and Cor, the son of King Arés,
and Lucan, cupbearer by rights,
and many other worthy knights.
They all saw Erec coming near
and recognized him and his dear
the moment that he came in sight.
The queen rejoiced in sheer delight.
The court was overjoyed, revived
to see that Erec had arrived,
for he was loved by one and all.
Once Erec was before the hall,
the king went down, on his return,
and then the queen came down in turn.
All said that God should guard and care
for him and for his maiden there.
They welcomed them, began to laud
the maiden's beauty and applaud.
The king himself, to her renown,
went to her horse and set her down.
The king, exceedingly polite,
was filled that hour with great delight.
He did her honor by his care
and led the maiden up the stair
to the stone hall, held by the hand.
Then, hand in hand, both Erec and
the queen proceeded on above.
"I bring my maiden and my love
before you, lady, and her dress
is poor and marred by shabbiness.

As she was given me, I brought her.
The maid I bring you is the daughter
of an impoverished vavasor.
To many poverty is sore.
Her father's courteous and true;
his means are limited and few.
A noblewoman is her mother,
who has a noble count for brother.
So as for beauty and good breeding,
no lack of either is impeding
my wish for marriage with this maid.
From poverty, she is arrayed
in this white dress, so badly torn,
where, at both elbows, holes are worn,
but nonetheless, if so I chose,
she would have had expensive clothes.
A maid, her cousin, offered her
a silk robe trimmed with ermine fur,
of variegated silk or gray,
but I would not let them array
or clothe the maid in other guise
until she came before your eyes.
Sweet lady mine, now give it thought,
for you can see the maid I brought
needs a becoming, lovely dress."
The queen, with swift attentiveness,
responded: "You are quite correct;
in robes of mine she should be decked.
I'll give her a new gown of mine,
a fresh one, beautiful and fine."
At once the queen went to costume
the maiden in her private room.
Immediately the queen bespoke
the court dress and embroidered cloak
of purple* cloth with crisscross screen

that had been cut to fit the queen.
The people whom she had assigned
brought her the cloak and court dress lined
down to the sleeves with whitest ermine.
Without deception, I determine
at wrists and at the neckline rim
the beaten gold within the trim
was more than half a mark of gold;
the trim was made throughout to hold
most precious jewels for that gown
of indigo, green, blue, dark brown.
The court dress was extremely nice,
but truly just as high in price
was that fine mantle, where as yet
no ribbons were attached and set,
because the purple cloak and gown
were brand-new and no hand-me-down.
The cloak was fine and admirable.
The collar had two furs of sable.
The tassels had an ounce of gold.
One had a jacinth to enfold,
and one a ruby with a gleam
far brighter than a candle beam.
The lining was white ermine fur,
none finer and none lovelier
was ever come upon or shown.
The purple cloth was finely sewn
with little crosses, different hues:
in indigos and reds, dark blues
and yellows, whites and blues and greens.
The following order of the queen's
was silken ribbons that would hold
the cloak, five ells embroidered gold.
She was brought ribbons, fair and matched,
whereon the queen had them attached

to this fine mantle with due haste.
To have the ribbons nicely placed,
she brought a master of that kind
who got them fastened and aligned.
The mantle needed nothing more;
the lady most superior
embraced the maiden in white dress
and spoke these words with candidness.
"To honor you," went her remarks,
"this court dress worth one hundred marks
in silver, with the cloak overlaid,
for your white dress I bid you trade.
This much I give you of my store;
another time I'll give you more."
The maid was swift to acquiesce;
she thanked the queen and took the dress.
To a small chamber she withdrew,
led by young maids, in number two.
Within this chamber, thus removed,
her own white garment she removed.
She put her court dress on and placed
a gold brocade belt at her waist.
She asked to have her white dress given
to charity, for love of Heaven,
then put the mantle in its place.
She did not have a somber face.
The garment so well suited her,
it made her even lovelier.
The maidens wove a golden thread
through golden hair upon her head;
although the gold was very fine,
the maid's curls had a brighter shine.
Upon her head the maidens placed
a golden circlet interlaced
with floral handwork, many-hued.

As best they could the maids pursued
their work adorning Erec's maid
so no improvement could be made.
A topaz at her neck was clasped,
by two nielloed gold clips grasped,
and fastened by a maid in waiting.
She looked so fair and captivating,
I don't believe in any land,
no matter how you searched and scanned,
could you have found her equal there,
since Nature formed her with such care.
The maid went out the chamber door
and came before the queen once more.
The queen, who loved her, was most glad
to make her welcome, pleased she had
such beauty and such self-command.
They took each other by the hand
and sought the king. When he had seen
the maiden coming with the queen,
the king arose to meet them all.
Upon their entrance in the hall,
so many knights were there to meet
the ladies, rising to their feet,
the names of one-tenth, one-thirteenth
I could not say, or one-fifteenth,
but I can tell you how were named
some of the best and most acclaimed
of barons of the Table Round,
the best of knights the world around.*
Before all knights of worth and fame
Gawain should be the first to name.
The second, Erec, son of Lac.
The third was Lancelot du Lac.
The fourth was Gornemant of Gohort.
Fair Coward ranked the fifth at court.

The sixth knight was the Ugly Valiant.
The seventh knight, of Lis, was Meliant.
The eighth Manduiz the Wise was styled.
The ninth was Dodinel the Wild,
and Gandeluz as tenth we'll count,
a man of very good account.
I'll name the next knights, unencumbered
by listing them as they were numbered.
Yvain the Brave was also there;
Yvain the Bastard was elsewhere;
and Tristan, never once in laughter,*
sat by Bliobleheris; and after
there came Short-Armed Karadués,
a knight known for his merriness;
and Caveron of Robderic;
and the son of King Quenedic;
and the Youth of Quintareus;
and Yder of Mount Dolorous;
Gaheriet; Kay, of Estral called;
Amangons; and Gales the Bald;
Giflet, the son of Do; Taulas,
for combat never one to pass,
a vassal thought a paragon;
Loholt, who was King Arthur's son;*
and the Hotheaded Sagremore
was one whom we must not ignore;
and Bedoier, Constable of the Stables,
versed at backgammon and chess tables;
the Welsh Galegantin; King Lot;
and Bravaïn should not be forgot.
But when the lovely unknown maid
saw all the ranks of knights arrayed
and gazing at her steadily,
she bowed her head and readily
became abashed; her face was flushed.

It was no wonder that she blushed.
Embarrassment well suited her
and made her even lovelier.
The king saw she was mortified
and did not wish to leave her side.
He took her hand—his clasp was light—
and seated her upon his right.
The queen was seated on his left
and made a comment that was deft:
"Sire, I think someone should report,
like Erec, to a royal court,
who wins a lady of such charms
in other lands by force of arms.
In waiting we were not remiss,
for now you can bestow a kiss
upon the fairest maiden sent
to court, which no one will resent.
That I tell lies none will protest
when I call her the loveliest
of all the maidens here inside
and all the maidens found worldwide."
The king said, "That's no lie; upon her
I shall bestow the white stag's honor,
unless by challenges deterred."
He told the knights: "Lords, you have heard.
What do you think? What do you say?
In body, face, and every way
a maid should be, are you not sure
she has more beauty and allure,
as I think, than all maidens found
this side of where the sky meets ground?
I say she should receive by right
the honor of the stag of white.
But you, lords, would you say the same?
Has anyone a counterclaim?

If someone wishes to protest,
his thoughts must promptly be expressed.
As I am king, I must not lie;
with baseness I cannot comply,
or falsity, or haughtiness.
I must back reason, righteousness.
A loyal king is thus compelled
to guarantee the law upheld,
and faith and justice and the truth.
I've not the least desire, in sooth,
to be disloyal or do wrong,
not to the weak or to the strong.
None should reproach me any lapse.
I do not want to let elapse
the customs and the ways of old
my ancestors cared to uphold.
I think you would have little use
for an attempt to introduce
such customs and such laws except
the ones the king, my father, kept.*
I wish to see retained, preserved
the customs that my sire observed,
Pendragon, king and emperor,
no matter what may be in store.
Give an opinion, all of you;
do not be slow to tell me true.
If she should not be kissed, by right
and custom of the stag that's white,
of all of those in my household
I want to have the truth be told."
The whole court shouted with one voice:
"By God, sire, and His cross, your choice
you rightly may think suitable.
She is by far most beautiful;
more beauty by comparison

has she than radiance the sun.
So freely give the kiss to her;
grant her the kiss; we all concur."
Since all were pleased, the king so heard,
he would not have the kiss deferred.
He kissed her with great courtesy
with all his barons there to see.
The king said to her: "My sweet friend,
unsullied love I now extend.
All guile and malice I eschew
and love you with a heart that's true."
By this adventure, at his court
the king restored by his support
the right and custom owed white deer;
the first verse is concluded here.*

EREC'S WEDDING

THE stag's kiss having been bestowed
by custom in that country owed,
next courteous Erec was engrossed
by his concern for his poor host;
he did not wish to fail to heed
what he had promised and agreed.
He kept his promises alive,
because he promptly sent him five
fat, rested horses bearing packs
of robes and fabrics on their backs,
with buckrams, scarlets therein rolled,
and silver bars and marks of gold,
and furs of sable, gray, vair ilks,
rich purples, oriental silks.
When they had laden every steed
with all a gentleman might need,

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rich purples, oriental silks.
When they had laden every steed
with all a gentleman might need,

ten knights, and servants numbering ten,
from his own household and his men
he sent to ride with these pack horses,
requesting them in his discourses
to greet his host when at his house
and show to him and to his spouse
such honor and such reverence
as Erec's due in deference,
and once the men distributed
to them the pack horses they led,
the gold and silver coins, the bezants,*
and elegant attire as presents
contained within the packed chests' horde,
to bring the lady and the lord
with honor on the highest scales
back to his realm in Further Wales.*
Two castles he had designated:
the handsomest, best situated,
best fortified in case of war
throughout the land's interior:
one castle was called Roadan,
one Montreval, and Erec's plan
was, when they reached his realm, to give
these castles as their place to live,
with jurisdiction, revenue,
and all he promised as their due.
The gold and silver, and the stacks
of cloths and deniers in the packs,
and steeds, gifts which were Erec's boast,
all were presented to his host
by messengers that very day,
who were not anxious to delay,
and then they brought the couple thence
to Erec's realm, with deference.
Within three days they reached his lands;

the castles' keeps were in their hands.
King Lac, not being one who voiced
objections, honored them, rejoiced
for his son Erec's sake, made known
the towns were freely theirs to own,
established lord and lady there,
and made the knights and burghers swear
as their true lords they would be deemed
and duly cherished and esteemed.
When that was done where they sojourned,
at once the messengers returned
to their lord Erec, who desired
to make them welcome and inquired
about the vavasor, his mate,
his father, and his kingdom's state.
He asked for news on their account,
and he received a full account.
Once they'd installed the vavasor,
the fast-approaching time came for
the rites of Erec's wedding day,
and Erec chafed at the delay.
He would not suffer more or tarry.
He sought the king and asked to marry
and hold the wedding at his court,
a wish he hoped he would not thwart.
The king accorded his consent,
and then throughout his realm he sent
for kings, dukes, counts within its measure
who held their lands at royal pleasure.
Let none be so bold, to his cost,
as not to come for Pentecost.
Not one lord dared to stay behind;
all came to court and none declined,
once that the king expressed his order.
Now listen well, and I shall order

the kings and counts, each one by name.
With his fine entourage there came
Branles of Gloucester, first of counts,
who led at right one hundred mounts;
and after came Menagormon,
who was the lord of Clivedon;
and the lord of the Mountain High
with a great company came by.
The count of Traverain came then,
attended by one hundred men;
and after came Count Godegrain,
who brought no fewer in his train.
With those whom you will hear me name
Moloas, a rich baron, came,
the great lord of the Isle of Glass,
where thunder is not heard to pass,
no lightning strikes, no storms foray,
and where no toads or serpents stay,
no hot or wintry a sojourn.
Graislemier of East Posterne
brought twenty comrades from afar.
Then came his brother Guingamar,
lord of the Isle of Avalon,
and we have heard tell thereupon
Morgan the Fay made him her lover,*
the proven truth, we will discover.
And from Tintagel David came,
one never known to grieve or blame.
There came there many dukes and counts,
but kings in even more amounts.
Garras of Cork, a monarch proud,
came with five hundred knights, a crowd
dressed in brocade and silken clothes,
their tunics, mantles, and their hose.
Upon a horse from Cappadocia

Aguiflez came, the king of Scotia,
and brought with him in his convoy
both of his sons, Cadret and Quoi,
two knights extremely feared and famed.
Among the others I have named
there came King Ban of Gormoret,
accompanied by the younger set,
for with him only youths appeared
without a mustache or a beard.
So he brought many fond of pleasure:
two hundred youths his train did measure,
and each one, of whatever walk,
brought falcon, merlin, sparrow hawk,
tercel, or goshawk to the town,
some molted, some still reddish brown.
The old King Kerrin of Orcel
had brought no youthful personnel;
his escort was two hundred peers,
the youngest aged one hundred years,
with heads or hair turned white and gray,
so many years had passed away,
and beards that reached down to the belt.
Great love for them King Arthur felt.
The lord of dwarfs next joined the press:
Bilis, king of Antipodés,
who was a dwarf and nothing other,
and Blïant was his own full brother.
Of all the dwarfs Bilis was smallest;
his brother Blïant was the tallest.
Within the realm, he topped each knight
one-half foot or full hand span's height.
For sumptuous authority
Bilis brought in his company
two kings, and both were dwarfs the same,
his landholders in feudal claim:

Gribalo and Glodoalan,
considered marvelous by man.
When at the court the dwarfs appeared,
the three were cherished and revered;
at once all three, though they were short,
were served as kings while at the court,
because true noblemen had come.
So when King Arthur saw, in sum,
his lords assembled from each part,
it made him very glad of heart.
To make them even more delighted,
he'd have one hundred youths be knighted,
and he commanded them to bathe.
Of Alexandrian brocade
each had a robe of many hues,
cut any style that he might choose,
as he might wish, as he might like.
They all got arms that were alike
and steeds whose speed exceeds most bounds;
the worst was worth one hundred pounds.
When Erec wed, he had to claim
his wife by naming her true name.
A wedded wife one cannot be
if one is not named properly.
As yet her name was unrehearsed,
and it was now they knew it first:*
Enide, her name in baptistery.
The archbishop of Canterbury,
now at the court, where he'd arrived,
gave her his blessing as prescribed.
When all at court were to be found,
all minstrels in the country round
possessing talent in the least
attended court and joined the feast.
With greatest joy the hall was filled.

Each person did as he was skilled:
some leapt, some tumbled, and some sprang
their magic tricks or shrilled or sang.
Some played the flute, some sounded notes
on pipes and vielles* and on rotes.
The maidens whirled and danced in rounds,
all to ensure that joy abounds.
Thus, everything that can impart
delight and joy in human heart
was present on the wedding day.
Tambourines, tabors drummed away,
bagpipes and fifes, flageolets,
and pipes and trumpets and musettes.
Now, what else ought to be disclosed?
No gates and doorways were kept closed.
Each exit and each entranceway
was left unguarded on that day,
and no one, rich or poor, was barred.
King Arthur was not cheap or hard:
he spoke to baker, butler, cook,
who at his orders undertook
to give to everyone his fill,
to each according to his will,
of bread and wine and venison.
The will of everyone was done;
no matter what it was he willed,
that day his wishes were fulfilled.
Throughout the palace great joy reigned,
but I shall spare you what remained
and tell the joy and the delight
in bedchamber and bed at night
when came the union of the pair,
with bishops and archbishops there.
They did not steal away Iseult
and send in as a substitute,

at that first union, a Brangien.*
Arrangements were made by the queen
for preparations and the bedding;
she loved both parties to the wedding.
The hart athirst and overtook
pants not so for the water brook,*
less swift would famished sparrow hawk
return when called and never balk,
as did these two come to the place
and moment when they could embrace.
That night would more than compensate
for all the time they had to wait.
When bedchamber became deserted,
each member's rights the pair asserted.
Their eyes began exchanging glances;
the joy of love the eye enhances
and sends the message to the heart,
pleased by the sight in every part.
Upon the message of the eyes
there followed sweetness, more to prize,
of kisses by which love is favored.
It was a sweetness they both savored;
their hearts imbibed its full increase.
Great effort was required to cease.
So kissing was their first love game.
The love to which they shared a claim
had made her bolder than she was,
so nothing gave her fear or pause;
she bore all, even when it hurt.
Before she rose she could assert
no further claim to be a maid
and was a lady newly made.
That day the minstrels' recompense
well pleased them by its affluence:
all they had lent was paid in full,

their gifts were very beautiful.
The robes the minstrels were allotted
were ermine, rabbit fur, or spotted,
or purples, scarlets silk or gray.
Whoever sought a horse or pay
was gifted as he would be served
with gifts as good as he deserved.
The court and nuptial displays
were held for over fifteen days
with such joy and magnificence;
for pleasure and munificence,
so Erec's honor would be greater,
King Arthur kept the barons later.
For two weeks longer they remained.
The third week they were entertained,
they all, by mutual consent,
decided on a tournament*
twixt York and Edinburgh Rock,
backed by Meliz and Meliadoc
and Sir Gawain, who would provide
the backing for the other side.
The tourney challenge thus occurred;
the court disbanded when it heard.

THE EDINBURGH TOURNAMENT

ONE month since Pentecost had passed,
the tournament attendance massed
below Edinburgh on the plain.
Red banners, many, flew amain,
and many white and many blue,
and many sleeves and wimples too,
bestowed for love on those who fought;
and many lances had been brought,

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and many lances had been brought,

with paint of azure, red, or green,
with many gold and silver seen,
and many different ones in hands,
both variegated and with bands.
On that day many heads were laced
in steel and iron helms, encased,
with many yellow, green, and red,
which gleamed as sunlight struck the head,
and many hauberks, blazons hung,
swords fastened on the left that swung,
and many good shields, fresh and new,
of fair red, green, and azure blue,
and many silver with gold bosses.
Then many tan and sorrel horses,
black with white feet, white, black, and bay,
met at a gallop in the fray.
Arms covered all the field; assembled,
the ranks on both sides shook and trembled.
Amid the noise, the fracas rose,
a brawl of lances dealing blows,
with lances smashed, shields pierced, and mail
torn on the hauberks as they fail,
and saddles emptied, knights upset,
as horses lathered, frothed, and sweat.
Then swords were drawn by one and all
on those who crashed down in the brawl.
Some ran to take oaths and to yield,
while others fought back on the field.
Then Erec on a white steed's flanks
rode all alone to head the ranks
and joust, if rivals could be spied.
Advancing from the other side
and spurring on an Irish steed
that carried him at rapid speed
came Proud Knight of the Moor abreast.

Then Erec struck below the chest
upon the shield with so much force
he knocked his rival off his horse.
He left the fight; the combatant
whom he next faced was Raindurant,
son of the Crone of Tergalo,
clad in blue silk, a knightly foe
whose prowess was considered vast.
The two knights traded, as they passed,
tremendous blows that they applied
upon the shield held at the side.
Then Erec knocked him with great strength
down on hard ground at full lance length.
On his return, still sitting pretty,
he met the King of the Red City,
a valiant foe to be his lot.
They held the reins fast at the knot
and grasped the shields by the enarmes.
Both warriors had splendid arms;
their steeds were excellent and fleet.
Upon their shields, fresh, new, and neat,
such terribly hard blows were bashed,
the lances both men held were smashed.
Such mighty blows were never seen.
Their shields and steeds and arms so keen
all clashed together in the sweep.
The king found that he could not keep
his grip on breast strap, rein, or girth,
for he was forced to come to earth.
The bridle and the reins as well
he carried with him as he fell.
All those who saw that jousting match
found it astonishing to watch.
With such a knight with whom to vie,
the cost of fighting was too high.

But Erec wanted no delay
from taking knights and steeds in fray,
because by jousting well he meant
to make his prowess evident;
his presence caused the ranks to quake.
The men on his side, for his sake,
were much emboldened by his deeds,
and Erec captured knights and steeds
to make more disconcertion reign.
I'll tell about the lord Gawain
because he fought extremely well.
In battle he struck down Guincel
and captured Gaudin of the Mount
and many more, both knight and mount.
Some others fought well: Sir Gawain,
Girflet, the son of Do, Yvain,
and the Hotheaded Sagremore.
Their side was so intent on war,
to castle gate these knights impelled
their foes, with many caught and felled.
The joust and combat recommenced
before the gate they pressed against,
with those who were of that redoubt
opposing those who were without.
Then Sagremore was struck to earth,
a captive knight of greatest worth;
and Erec brought deliverance.
He spurred at one foe, broke his lance,
struck at him underneath the breast,
and left his saddle dispossessed,
then drew his sword and past them rushed
and left helms dented in and crushed.
His foes gave way to him and fled;
the boldest all were filled with dread.
He gave so many thrusts and blows,

he rescued Sagremore from foes.
Back to the castle they were flung,
and then the vesper bell was rung.*
So well did Erec do that day,
he was the finest of the fray.
Next day was even better fought;
by his hand many knights were caught.
So many others lost their seats,
no one could have believed his feats
who had not seen what had occurred.
On both sides everyone concurred
that he had won the tourney field
both by his lance and by his shield.

EREC'S DEPARTURE FOR CARNANT

NOW Erec had achieved such fame,
none mentioned any other name.
No other man possessed such grace,
he seemed like Absalom in face;
with Solomon in speech he vied,
and with the lion in fierce pride;
and in largess in terms of grandeur
he was a peer of Alexander.
When Erec came back from this tourney,
he sought King Arthur's leave to journey
and gave the king to understand
he wished to travel to his land.
Wise, noble, courtly, he made known
his thanks for all the honors shown,
most wonderfully appreciative
of all the king agreed to give.
Then Erec took leave of the king;
he wanted to start traveling

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most wonderfully appreciative
of all the king agreed to give.
Then Erec took leave of the king;
he wanted to start traveling

back to his country, and he planned
to take his wife home to his land.
This trip the king could not gainsay
but wished he would not go away
and hoped the absence would be short
so Erec would soon be at court,
for it contained no lord more brave,
more valiant, more audacious save
Gawain, his nephew, very dear;
no one could claim to be his peer;
but Erec ranked next and was deemed
next highly cherished and esteemed
of any other knight he had.
But Erec would not stay and bade
his wife prepare for traveling
once he received leave from the king.
The knights admitted to his suite
were numbered sixty, an elite,
on steeds of gray and dappled sort.
Once Erec packed, they left the court.
The queen gave leave to go from there;
the knights he left in Heaven's care.
With his request the queen concurred,
so at the time that prime was heard
he left the royal palace bound.
He mounted while all stood around,
and Erec's wife got on her horse,
brought from her country, in due course,
and after his whole party mounted.
When knights and men-at-arms were counted,
their company was seven score.
Their full days traveled numbered four.
So they crossed rivers, rocky slopes,
and forest, mountain, plain, and copse,
until one day they reached Carnant,

a castle, very elegant,
that King Lac by his presence graced.
No castle could be better placed.
Carnant had forests in its bound,
and fields and vineyards could be found,
and rivers, orchards, and plowed sites,
and ladies present as were knights.
Youths, noble, brave, and filled with vigor,
clerks nobly born and taught with rigor
with ample income to dispense,
fair ladies of great elegance,
and burghers, strong and prosperous,
were, in the castle, numerous.
Before he reached it, Erec sent
two messengers ahead who went
to bring word of his cavalcade.
Immediately clerk, knight, and maid,
as ordered by the king, got mounted,
once that this news had been recounted.
He ordered them to blow each horn
and drape the streets and to adorn
the ways with silk and tapestry
to greet his son most joyously.
The king himself prepared to ride,
and eighty clerks rode at his side,
all gentlemen and honorable
attired in gray cloaks edged with sable,
five hundred knights by any count
upon a bay or sorrel mount,
or else a black mount with white feet,
and countless burghers, ladies fleet
came at a gallop and a run
until the king could see his son,
who recognized his father's face.
They both dismounted to embrace

and give each other kiss and greeting.
They did not leave their place of meeting
before a lengthy interval,
while greetings were exchanged by all.
The king rejoiced at his return
and sometimes left his son to turn
and give Enide a hug and kiss.
So on both sides he was in bliss.
He kissed and hugged them, undeterred,
and did not know whom he preferred.
They went on to the castle door.
To honor his arrival more,
the bells were all set ringing wild;
fresh reeds and rushes, mint grown wild,
the streets were wholly strewn with these,
while hangings and fine tapestries
of flowered silk and samite, spread
above the streets, hung overhead.
Rejoicing greatly and delighted,
all people present had united
in coming to see their new lord.*
The young and old were in accord;
no one had seen a joy so merry.
They came first to the monastery.
They were received in a procession
that gave its piety expression.
The altar of the crucifix
got Erec's offering, ten times six
marks silver, as he knelt and prayed,
a gift of which good use was made,
and one fine gold cross that had been
owned one time by King Constantine.
This cross that Erec gave contained
true cross whereon Lord God was pained
and crucified for our own sake

and let all of us captives break
out of the prison we were in,
all captive there for Adam's sin,
done as the Enemy advised.*
The cross was greatly to be prized,
for it was beautifully gemmed,
and from them many virtues stemmed.
The center and the corners hold
carbuncles of the color gold
with wondrous settings, jewels so rare
none have been seen that could compare;
each shed such brightness in the night
it might as well have been daylight
at morning when the sunlight shines.
The monasterial confines
required no lamp or chandelier
or candle, these gems shone so clear.
Two barons led in Erec's lady
before the altar of Our Lady.
May Jesus, Mary Virgin, give
an heir to them while they should live
who, after them, would next inherit,
she prayed in deeply pious spirit.
Before the altar, none had seen
an offering like her silk of green
and large embroidered chasuble,*
in finest gold worked overall.
It was, in proven verity,
Morgan the Fay's embroidery
while she was in the Parlous Vale,*
and it was wrought with great travail,
made of Almerian* silk of gold,
and was not fashioned to enfold
a chanting priest as chasuble cover;
the fairy meant it for her lover

as rich attire for him to wear,
for it was marvelously fair.
Skilled Guinevere, maneuvering,
the wife of Arthur, forceful king,
through Emperor Gassa got it made
into a chasuble, which stayed
within her chapel many days,
for it was lovely in all ways.
She gave Enide this chasuble,
a parting gift so valuable,
worth, truth to tell upon that score,
one hundred silver marks and more.
Once that Enide's prayer was complete,
she drew back slightly in retreat
and crossed herself, right-handed, heeding
the ways of women of good breeding.
They left the monastery bound;
their lodgings they directly found.
There was rejoicing at their presence.
The knights and burghers lavished presents
on Erec during that day's course.
One gave a palfrey, which was Norse,
another one a golden cup,
a sorrel goshawk one brought up,
a pointer, greyhound, were proffered,
one brought a sparrow hawk for bird,
a Spanish charger one revealed,
and one a pennon, one a shield,
and one a sword, and one a helm.
No king whoever in his realm
had greater joy than he received
or was more happily perceived.
All strove to serve him; many voiced
praise of Enide, and they rejoiced
much more at her than him, impelled

by beauty in her they beheld
and more by her nobility.
A silken spread from Thessaly
within a chamber had been laid.
Enide sat down on its brocade
with ladies round her, throngs of them;
yet in the way a sparkling gem
shines brighter than a gray-brown stone
and poppy is by rose outshone,
so was Enide much lovelier
than any dames and maids who were
within the whole world to be found,
whoever searched the world around.
So wisely spoken, with such feeling
for honor, noble, and appealing,
and of a gracious temperament
was she, no one saw any bent
in her toward any silliness,
or coarseness, or maliciousness.
She was well bred and had acquired
all those good qualities required
of any lady, which combined
with her largess and thoughtful mind.
All loved her for her character,
and any person serving her
felt better just for having served.
No criticisms were observed,
in her no failings could be found.
Within the realm and empire's bound
no lady had such excellence.
But Erec turned down tournaments.
He loved her so much for her charms,
he lost all interest in his arms.
Jousts ceased to be part of his life.
He wished to tarry with his wife,

to ladylove and mistress turned.
With hugs and kisses so concerned
and in his total captivation
he sought no other recreation,
which made his sad companions state
his love had grown immoderate,
and they complained ofttimes and soon,
for it was often well past noon
before he rose and left her side.
He was content and let them chide.
He never went too far from her
but nonetheless was always sure
his knights received the same largess
in terms of deniers, arms, and dress.
Wherever tournaments were fought
went Erec's knights, for whom he bought
most rich apparel and attire
and chargers that they would require
for jousting and for tournaments,
whatever might be the expense.
Then all his entourage declared
it was a shame that Erec cared
no longer to bear arms and fight
when he was once a valiant knight.
He was so blamed by everyone,
armed men and knights, for what he'd done,
Enide heard tell her lord, gallant
in chivalry, was recreant
and had much changed his way of life.
The matter weighed upon his wife,
and yet she dared not let it show
lest her lord, if she let him know,
be swift to take it much amiss
if she told him he was remiss.
A long time she concealed his blame,

until at last one morning came
when they lay in one bed at leisure,
wherein they had enjoyed much pleasure,
lay mouth to mouth, arms intertwined,
like those whom mutual love does bind.

ENIDE RECALLS EREC TO CHIVALRY

HE slumbered, and she lay awake
and recollected, with heartache,
the words that many in the land
said of her lord in reprimand.
When through her mind these harsh words swept,
Enide could not refrain but wept,
and, crushed by their disparagement,
by an unhappy accident
she uttered words in melancholy
she later thought the height of folly,
yet did not mean to be untoward.
She started gazing at her lord
and, up and down, let her eyes trace,
his handsome form and shining face.
She felt so terribly distressed,
the tears she wept fell on his chest.
"Oh, woe is me!" Thus did she speak,*
"What did I leave my land to seek?
I ought to sink into the ground
and disappear, now I have found
the finest knight of all, avowed
the boldest fighter and most proud,
more than a count or monarch royal,
and the most courteous and loyal,
has now relinquished chivalry
completely on account of me.

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I have disgraced him, well and true,
which I would not have wished to do.
Woe is you, sweetheart," she bewailed.
Then she fell silent as words failed.
But Erec's slumber was not deep.
He heard her voice while still asleep.
He wakened at the words she spoke
and was amazed, when he awoke,
to see her sobbing with such force.
He questioned her to learn its source.
"My dearest sweetheart, won't you say
why you are weeping in this way?
What causes you distress or woe?
I certainly intend to know.
Now, sweetheart, tell me as I bid;
be careful to keep nothing hid.
Why say 'Oh, woe is you!' to me?
No other, but me personally.
The words I heard were very clear."
Enide, aghast, was filled with fear;
her terror and dismay were keen.
"My lord, I don't know what you mean,"
in her denial she replied.
"My lady, what have you to hide?
To try concealment is inept;
I can see clearly you have wept.
To weep for nothing is absurd.
While you were shedding tears, I heard
the words that you were uttering."
"Dear sir, you did not hear a thing;
it was a dream, I should surmise."
"Now you are serving me up lies.
I openly have heard you lie;
you will be sorry by and by
not to acknowledge what is true."

"Sir, since you vex me as you do
to tell the truth, I shall reveal
what I was trying to conceal,
but you, I fear, will be perturbed.
Throughout this land all are disturbed,
blond and redheaded and brunet,
and say, to their immense regret
the use of arms you have resigned.
Your reputation has declined.
Last year all people would declare
you had no equal anywhere;*
they did not know, on all the earth,
a braver knight of greater worth.
Now you are mocked by one and all,
the young and old and great and small;
all say that you are recreant.
Could you believe me nonchalant
at hearing that you are disdained?
When people say it, I am pained.
What gives me even greater pause
is people say I am the cause.
I'm grieved to be the one all blame
for having caused your loss of fame;
they say I've caught you in a snare.
On my account you have no care
for the renown you sacrifice.
You should obtain some good advice
so you successfully regain
your first prestige and bleach this stain,
for I have heard you overblamed.
I dared not say you were defamed.
I often wept when I recalled
their words, for I was so appalled.
Just now I took their words so hard,
I was completely off my guard,

and could not help say, 'Woe is you.'"
"Which, lady, you were right to do.
My critics too were justified.
Make yourself ready now to ride.
Get dressed at once, get out of bed
and clothe yourself in haste," he said.
"You must put on your finest dress;*
on the best palfrey you possess
you must have your best saddle laid."
Enide was very much dismayed
and, sad and pensive, rose from bed.
She blamed herself that she had said
the foolish words she deeply rued,
but she must drink as she had brewed.
She cried out: "Foolish, wretched lass!
I was too comfortable, alas,
and there was nothing that I lacked.
How dared I speak, through want of tact,
so senselessly? Why, Heavens above!
Was not my lord too much in love?
Indeed, he loved me to excess.
What causes me the more distress,
now I must go into exile,
is not to see him all that while
whose love of me was so sincere
that he held nothing else so dear.
The best man that was ever born
held everything but me in scorn.
His passion for me was so great,
I was so very fortunate;
I lacked for nothing I could want,
but was indeed too arrogant
to offer him such an affront.
I erred by being proud and blunt
and I should rightfully atone.

Some can't leave well enough alone."
The lady voiced her deep distress
while she put on her finest dress,
just as her husband had required,
but nothing was as she desired,
and misery had her in thrall.
Then she had a handmaiden call
a squire of hers to see her there,
and bade him saddle and prepare
her palfrey, the expensive Norse.
No count or king had better horse.
As she commanded, straightaway,
the squire requested no delay
and saddled up the dappled steed.
And Erec had a squire proceed,
as Erec ordered when he came,
to bring his arms to arm his frame.
He went up to a gallery.
A rug of Limoges tapestry
was spread before him on the ground.
The man whom he had ordered found
the armor that he ran to get;
upon the rug the arms were set.
Across where Erec's arms were laid
a leopard's image was portrayed
upon the rug where he was sitting,
and he prepared for his outfitting.*
His lower limbs he first had placed
in greaves of shining steel and laced,
then donned a hauberk so high-priced
no link of mail mesh could be sliced.
This hauberk was expensive stuff;
its iron content not enough
to make a needle or to rust
within and out, for it was just

completely silver, shining pale,
of triply woven, tiny mail,
its workmanship so very fine,
accept assurances of mine,
its weight, whenever it was worn,
felt no more wearying when borne
than if the wearer wished to ease
a silk coat over his chemise.
The men-at-arms and knights began
to wonder what was Erec's plan;
why he donned arms and for what task,
but none of them would dare to ask.
Once Erec's hauberk had been placed,
next came the helm a young man laced.
Its gold, bejeweled band could surpass
the brightness of a looking glass.
Then Erec girded on his sword
and ordered them now to bring forward
his saddled horse, his Gascon bay,
and then he called a youth to say:
"Lad, go now, at this very hour,
run to the chamber near the tower
where my wife is and make it clear
she's kept me too long waiting here.
Tell her to come at once and mount;
I've had to wait on her account.
She's taken too long to prepare."
The youth went off and found her there,
appareled, though she mourned and wept.
He said at once: "Why have you kept
so long here, lady, and delayed?
My lord awaits without, arrayed
in all of his accoutrements,
and would have been on horse long hence,
had you been ready for your ride."

Enide was wholly mystified
by what her lord might have in mind
but in her conduct was refined,
for when before her lord she stood
she seemed as happy as she could.
To center courtyard came Enide.
King Lac pursued her at high speed.
The knights ran up in disarray,
and every one, both young and gray,
asked Erec if, upon this trip,
he wanted his companionship.
Each came and asked to be allowed,
but Erec swore to them and vowed
to take no comrades of his own
except his wife and her alone.
Without an escort he would go.
The king inquired in greatest woe:
"Dear son, what is this plan you chose?
What you intend you must disclose;
from me you must hold nothing back.
Where would you go?" inquired King Lac.
"And why, despite all I can say,
go unaccompanied on your way
by knights and squires? If you would fight
in single combat with some knight,
that fact does not prohibit you
from traveling with a retinue,
for pleasure and for company.
You ought to take a company
of knights that you have called your own;
a king's son should not ride alone.
Dear son, have them load your packhorses
and take with you of your knight forces
some thirty, forty, even more;
take with you gold and silver store,

all that befits a nobleman."
Then Erec set forth his whole plan,
with explanations to convey
why he would soon be on his way.
"It can't be helped, sire. I shall lead
upon my right no extra steed.
I need no silver, gold, or squire.
No man-at-arms do I require.
No company do I prefer
except my wife and only her.
I pray, if matters take such turns
that I should die and she returns,
please love and cherish her with care
for love of me and at my prayer,
and grant to her, without restriction
or any battle, war, or friction,
life use of half the land you own."
The king heard what his son made known.
"I grant it, son, but deeply grieve
you have no escort when you leave.
The prospect makes me miserable.
You would not, if I had my will."
"It can't be helped, sire; off I go.
May Heaven care for you below.
Remember my companions' needs:
give them their weapons and their steeds;
maintain them all as knights are kept."
The king could not refrain and wept;
he parted from his son and cried,
and other people wept and sighed.
Great lamentation did they make,
both knights and ladies, for his sake.
All people wept and took it hard,
and many fainted in the yard.
They hugged and kissed him as they sobbed,

and of their wits were all but robbed.
They could not have grieved more or swooned
had he sustained a mortal wound.
He said to them consolingly:
"My lords, why weep so hard for me?
I am unhurt; I am unchained;
by grief there's nothing to be gained.
I leave but shall return anew,
God willing, when I can so do.
I leave you all to God's protection;
let me depart without objection.
You're causing me excess delay.
When men and women weep this way,
it makes me feel annoyed and grim."
He left them to God, and they him.
At his departure grief was rife.
But Erec left and took his wife
he knew not where, but on adventure.
"Ride at high speed and do not venture
to have the insolence and nerve
to tell me what you may observe.
I order you not to address
a single word to me, unless
I've spoken first, and to proceed
along the roadway at high speed.
In perfect safety you will ride."
"Just so, my lord," Enide replied.
In silence she rode on ahead;
between them not a word was said.
Enide lamented, soft and low,
but to herself expressed her woe
lest her words carry and annoy:
"Alas, poor wretch, from greatest joy
where God had raised me by His powers
He has abased me within hours.

Once Fortune beckoned to me and
now suddenly withdraws her hand,
a fate I would not have deplored,
if, wretch, I dared address my lord.
I am betrayed, undone, and dead;
the hatred that he feels is dread.
He hates me, I can clearly see;
he does not wish to speak to me,
and I lack boldness, so I may
not even dare to look his way."

THE THREE ROBBERS

BUT while she wailed and felt bereft,
a knight appeared who lived by theft.
Out of the forest he emerged
with two companions, who converged
attired in arms and armor, all three.
He greatly coveted the palfrey
on which Enide rode fast before.
"Do you know, lords, what lies in store?"
he asked his comrades in pursuit.
"If in this place we win no loot,
we are disgraced, devoid of pluck,
incredibly down on our luck.
Here comes a lady or a maiden,
no telling which, but lovely, laden
with fine attire and richest wraps.
Her saddle, cover, breast cloth, straps,
and palfrey that I see as marks
are worth some twenty silver marks.
I wish to make the palfrey mine;
the rest to you I shall assign.
It is my portion of the loot.

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the rest to you I shall assign.
It is my portion of the loot.

This knight will leave here destitute
of all his lady owns, by God,
for I'll ride over him roughshod,
and I can say and be sincere
he'll pay, to keep it, very dear,
so it is right for me to go
first to do battle with our foe."
The other two knights so concurred;
with shield as cover off he spurred.
The other two remained behind.
That two knights should not fall combined
in combat on one adversary
was, in that era, customary.
If they had overwhelmed him thus,
they would be counted treacherous.
Enide, who saw the robbers near,
was gripped by a tremendous fear.
"Oh, Lord, what can I say?" she said.
"My lord will soon be caught or dead,
for they are three and he but one.
It's not fair play, it isn't done
to have one knight contend with three.
That knight will strike immediately
while my lord is not on his guard.
Am I a coward? Is it hard,
too hard, to dare to tell him this?
I shall not show such cowardice.
I'll tell him what is taking place."
At once toward him she turned her face.
"My dear sir, are you lost in thought?
I fear that you are being sought
by three knights, spurring in pursuit.
I fear they're men of ill repute."
"What?" Erec said, "What have you spoken?
So your respect for me is token.

You have been overbold, indeed,
to disobey and fail to heed
the prohibition I had given.
Now this time you will be forgiven;
but if my patience is abused
once more, you'll never be excused."
He turned his lance and shield to fight
and launched himself against the knight,
who saw him coming to attack
and challenged Erec, who yelled back.
Both knights spurred forward for their bout.
Both fighters held their lances out.
The thief missed Erec totally,
and Erec did him injury;
attacking skillfully and well.
The way his blow to shield face fell
he split the shield from end to end.
The hauberk's mail could not defend
the robber knight, pierced through the chest,
for Erec stabbed his chest and pressed
his lance in one and one-half feet,
withdrew it sideways in retreat,
and felled the knight, with death his part,
for Erec's lance tip reached his heart.
Of those two knights who had deferred,
one left his comrade's side and spurred
toward Erec, threatening him with harm,
but in turn Erec thrust his arm
through shield at neck and boldly sought,
with shield at chest, the man he fought.
Upon the blazons lances crashed.
The second robber's lance was smashed,
while Erec's effort with his lance
sufficed to make the shaft advance
through that thief's body by one-fourth.

This man would not tire him henceforth.
He felled him senseless; then he spurred
his steed and angled toward the third.
That thief saw Erec coming near
and tried to flee, consumed by fear.
He dared not tarry where he stood
and ran for refuge in the wood.
The robber's fleeing was a waste,
for Erec shouted as he chased:
"Come back here, vassal, turn around
and be prepared to stand your ground,
or I shall strike you on the run!
No use to flee; you are undone."
The robber would not turn his steed
and kept on fleeing at high speed.
Still Erec chased and reached his side,
unhorsed the knight when he applied
a blow to shield paint, as they sparred,
and paid these three no more regard.
One he had slain, one he had hit,
and of the third was so well quit,
he lay unhorsed upon the ground.
He captured all three mounts and bound
the steeds together by the reins.
They differed in their coats and manes.
The first was white as milk; the second
was black—attractive it was reckoned;
the third had spots from head to tail.
Back Erec went along the trail
where, waiting for him, was Enide.
He ordered her to drive and lead
the horses, three ahead, in front,
and threatened her for her affront.
Henceforth she must not have the cheek
to open up her mouth and speak

one word without his leave to her.
"I never shall again, good sir,"
she answered him, "just as you will."
They went ahead, and she kept still.

THE FIVE ROBBERS

THEY had not ridden on one league
when up came five more knights in league,
within a valley, in advance.
At rest each knight had placed his lance;
the shield at neck was also placed.
The burnished helmets had been laced.
They rode in search of robbery.
Then they beheld the horses, three
brought by the lady coming near,
with Erec riding in the rear.
The robbers saw the way they fared,
and verbally they split and shared
the harnesses among each one
as if they were already won.
In coveting is evil's root.
They did not like what resolute
and stout defense they must outstrip.
There's many a slip twixt cup and lip.
Don't fry a fish until it's caught,
so these assailants would be taught.
One knight sought as his perquisite
the lady or would die of it.
The other said he sought no more
of all the booty for his store
besides the steed with dappled back.
The third said he would have the black.
The fourth said, "I shall have the white."

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The fifth one was no coward knight
and claimed the charger as his pelf
and armor of the knight himself,
which he announced that he would win
in single combat and begin
the fight, if they would have it so.
The others gladly let him go.
He left them and went on his course.
The robber had a good swift horse.
Though Erec saw, he gave no signs
he noticed him or his designs.
No sooner did Enide behold
the robbers than her blood ran cold.
She felt aghast and terrified.
"Alas, what shall I do?" she sighed.
"I don't know what to do or say,
because I shall be made to pay,
my lord has threatened often, grim,
if I say anything to him.
But if my lord were left here dead,
I never should be comforted,
for I should die or come to grief.
Good Lord! He does not see this thief.
Why am I waiting, wretched fool?
I feel I tried too hard to school
my tongue a little while ago.
Those who are coming here, I know,
have evil purposes they seek.
Ah! Heavens! But what shall I speak?
He will kill me. Then let him kill;
I won't wait longer or keep still."
She called, "Sir," in a gentle way.
"Who? What is it you wish to say?"
"That I see, sir, for mercy's sake,
five knights emerging from this brake

of whom I am in greatest fear.
To fight with you, it's very clear,
is what these five knights have in mind.
While four of five have stayed behind,
the fifth is coming, bent on mayhem,
as fast as charger can convey him,
and soon will strike you where you are.
The other knights, who are not far,
although for now they're holding back,
at need will help him to attack."
He said to her, "Your thinking erred
when you defied my spoken word,
for I enjoined you not to tell,
but, notwithstanding, I knew well
that you hold me in scant respect.
Your helpfulness was incorrect,"
said Erec, "and I am not grateful.
Indeed, it makes me find you hateful,
I tell you, as I've said before.
Now I shall pardon you once more,
but next time show more circumspection
and do not look in my direction;
it would be folly at its peak;
I do not like to hear you speak."
Then Erec spurred against the knight.
The two joined battle in their fight,
and each knight sought and struck his foe.
But Erec struck so hard a blow
to windpipe, when the shield had flown,
he caused a fractured collarbone.
The stirrups snapped; the thief was downed.
No fear the robber could rebound,
for he was hurt and badly crushed.
Toward Erec the next robber rushed,
and they collided, rapid-paced.

Then Erec effortlessly placed
the cutting, well-forged steel and smote
beneath the robber's chin and throat,
so that the steel cut wholly through
the nerves and bones and outward flew.
On both sides of the wound there spread
hot crimson blood. The thief's soul fled.
His heartbeat stopped. The third thief leapt
forth from the lookout he had kept
beside a ford but opposite,
and galloped splashing straight through it.
So Erec met him, spurring forward,
before the robber left the ford,
and struck so well and with such force
he flattened out the thief and horse.
Within the stream the charger, downed,
lay on the thief until he drowned.
The horse continued with its throes
and, with a struggle, it arose.
Thus Erec overcame the third.
The two remaining knights conferred,
and they decided they would yield
and not attempt the battlefield.
Downriver they began to race,
and Erec, in pursuit, gave chase
and struck one robber's spine a blow
that bent him over saddlebow.
With Erec's full strength in the thwack,
he broke a lance upon his back.
The knight pitched forward, down he fell,
and Erec made him pay back well
the lance he broke with him beneath.
He drew his sword blade from its sheath.
The thief arose, quite foolish thinking,
for Erec set his sword to drinking

red blood with three blows, taking aim
to slice his shoulder from his frame
so that he tumbled to the ground.
Then with his sword blade Erec found
the other robber, riding hard
3058 without companions or a guard.
a When he saw Erec in pursuit,
b his fear made him irresolute.
3059 He dared not wait and could not flee
3060 and had to let his horse go free,
which offered no deliverance.
The thief discarded shield and lance
and let himself fall down to ground.
So Erec stopped, the thief was downed,
and he was spared by Erec's leave,
but Erec bent down to retrieve
the lance the thief had dropped and left,
since Erec's own lance had been cleft.
He took the lance and had no mind
3070 to let the chargers stay behind.
He took all five mounts, and Enide
found them no easy group to lead.
He gave her five to join the three,
and told her to ride instantly
and keep her tongue completely still
lest she should come to harm or ill.
But she had not one word to say
in answer, and they went away
and took the horses, eight in all.

THEY rode till night began to fall
and saw no hamlet and no town.
When evening fell they bedded down
beneath a tree upon a moor.
He bade the lady to secure
some sleep while he kept vigilant,
but such commands she did not want.
She termed them wrong, not what she chose;
he had more need to take repose,
which Erec granted, well content.
Beneath his head his shield face went.
To cover him, the lady put
her mantle from his head to foot.
He slept, and she remained awake.
No rest that evening did she take,
with each steed's reins in hand all night,
until the early morning light.
Enide reproached herself and muttered
a curse about those words she uttered
and said she had been most unfair.
"I have not suffered half the share
of misery that I deserve.
I never should have showed such nerve,
pride, or presumption as I've shown.
I could undoubtedly have known
there was no knight that could outdo
my own lord. Yes, how well I knew,
and now my knowledge is more keen,
for with my own eyes I have seen
that three or five armed men have wrung
no fear from him. Cursed be my tongue,
the pride and outrage it proclaimed;
I feel so terribly ashamed."

The whole night she continued mourning
until dawn broke and it was morning.
Then Erec rose at break of day,
and he continued on his way;
she rode before, he on her trail.
At noon, when they were in a vale,
before them came a squire, who went
3120 with two young men who had been sent
with five whole cheeses, rich and fine,
3122 together with some cakes and wine.
a Count Galoain's men made their way
b to those who cut his fields of hay.
3123 The squire deduced, who was astute,
from Erec and his sweetheart's route,
which came from forested terrain,
that night the couple must have lain
within the wood, nor did he think
they had had nourishment or drink,
for in one day's ride all around
3130 no town or castle could be found,
no tower, strong manor, abbey, inn,
or hospice they could stay within.
A thought came, generous and fair.
The squire went forth to greet the pair
and hailed them in a courteous way.
"Sir, I believe, and I would say
your last night left you very tired.
This lady too, when she retired,
lay in the forest long awake.
3140 I'll give you some of this white cake
if you will taste some of its flavor.
I do not seek to curry favor,
and I have nothing to entreat.
The cake is made of wholesome wheat.
I have rich cheeses and good wine,

white linens, goblets that are fine.
You need not look for a repast
another place to break your fast.
The arms in which you are arrayed
you should remove within the shade
these hornbeams cast to take some rest.
Dismount and do as I suggest."
As he put foot to earth, "Your food
I shall consume with gratitude,
my gracious, dear friend," Erec said.
"I do not wish to go ahead."
The squire was skillful and attended
the lady well as she descended.
The young men in the squire's train
held Erec's horses by the rein.
They sat in shade beneath the trees.
The squire made Erec more at ease,
removed his helm, untied the lace
that fixed the ventail to his face,
then spread the cloth on thick green grass
before them, and began to pass
the cake and wine, which he combined
with cheese from which he cut the rind.
They ate the food, which they did crave,
and gladly drank the wine he gave.
The squire was waiting on the pair,
and he lost nothing by his care.
When they'd consumed their food and wine,
said Erec, generous and fine:
"Friend, as a boon for what you've done,
I've horses and shall give you one.
Accept the charger you think best
and, if you please, I've a request:
ride to the castle and prepare
luxurious lodgings for me there."

Whatever Erec might desire
he'd do with pleasure, said the squire.
He sought the steeds, untied the pack,
gave Erec thanks, and took the black:
the finest charger as he counted.
Foot in left stirrup ring, he mounted.
He left the couple at that place
and rode to town at rapid pace
and hired well-furnished hostelry.
The squire returned immediately.
He said: "Mount instantly, my lord;
you have a lovely place to board."
First Erec mounted, lady after.
They reached the town not long thereafter
and lodgings that they would employ,
where they were welcomed in with joy.
The host gave them a good reception,
all they required without exception
he had for them in plenitude
and in a willing, pleasant mood.
The squire, once he had labored hard
to show the two his high regard,
sought out his charger to remount.
Before the gallery of the count
he led his horse toward barn and pen.
The count and three more vassal men
had come up there to lean outside.
The count could see his squire astride
the black war horse, so he inquired
whose charger had the squire acquired.
The squire replied it was his own.
The count made his amazement known.
"Indeed? Where did you get your prize?"
"There is a knight I greatly prize
who gave the steed to me, my lord.

I led him to this town to board
and lodge within a burgher's dwelling.
His courtesy is most compelling,
and I've seen no man handsomer.
I pledge my word, vow, and aver
there is no way I could express
a portion of his handsomeness."
"I don't believe," was the reply,
"he could be handsomer than I."
"Upon my word," the squire said,
"you are quite handsome and well bred.
No native knights, count, could be found
to equal you the country round,
for you would seem much handsomer,
but I dare say of this knight, sir,
that he is handsomer than you,
except that he is black and blue,
tired by his mail and blows he caught.
Within the forest bounds he fought
against eight knights while all alone
and leads their chargers as his own.
With him he leads a lady fair.
No woman ever had a share
of half the beauty she displays."
The count, who heard these words of praise,
wished to ride out and to behold
if they were true or falsely told.
"I've never heard such things before,
so lead me to his lodging door.
I surely wish to verify
if you are truthful or you lie."
The squire replied, "Just as you say.
This is the path, sir, and the way,
and it is no long distance there."
"I cannot wait to see the pair,"

the count replied, and he descended.
The squire dismounted and attended
the count, who mounted on the steed,
then ran on to give Erec heed
the count was coming for a visit.
Now, Erec's lodging was exquisite,
for he was used to opulence;
wax candles lit his residence,
and many tapers were aflame.
The count and three companions came,
because he brought no more than those,
and in his presence Erec rose;
he was exceedingly well bred.
"You are most welcome, sir," he said.
The count returned his cordial greeting.
The two exchanged words at their meeting
and grew acquainted as they met
upon a soft white coverlet.
The count proposed, and pled, and prayed
to see their bill for lodging paid,
if only Erec would see fit,
which Erec did not deign permit,
for he had money to disburse
and needed nothing from his purse.
They spoke of many things to ponder;
however the count's eyes would wander
and on the lady come to rest.
The loveliness that she possessed
caught his attention and his mind;
toward her his thoughts were all inclined.
His gazes her way rarely ceased;
he coveted her and was pleased,
and her great beauty sparked his passion.
So he asked leave, in slyest fashion,
of Erec to converse with her.

"If it does not displease you, sir,
I ask your leave," he said outright,
"from courtesy and for delight
to sit down at that lady's side,
and you should think no harm implied;
to see you both was my intent.
I seek the lady to present
my services in fullest measure.
In doing what may cause her pleasure,
for love of you, I shall be zealous."
The count did not make Erec jealous;
he saw no harm of any kind.
"My lord," he said, "I do not mind.
Enjoy her talk and company;
don't think you are annoying me.
I willingly grant you permission."
No further was Enide's position
than two full lances would amount.
Upon a low stool sat the count;
beside the lady was his place.
Toward him the lady turned her face;
she was polite and self-possessed.
"Ah," said the count, "I am distressed
you travel in such poverty;
it weighs upon me heavily.
If you are willing to believe,
esteem and rank you shall receive;
great property will come to you,
for to your beauty would be due
great honor, rank, and deference.
So, if it is your preference,
I shall make you my mistress and
my lady over all my land.
I've deigned to sue for your affection,
and I do not expect rejection.

I know your own lord does not deem
you merit love or his esteem;
in that I cannot be misled.
A good lord will be yours instead
if at my side you now remain."
She said, "You're laboring in vain.
Sir, better I were yet unborn
or burned upon a fire of thorn
and then to have my ashes strewed
than to have failed in rectitude
in any manner toward my lord
or have considered so abhorred
an evil, crime, or treachery.
You have behaved despicably
by asking me for my assent.
There is no way I would consent."
The count began to be inflamed.
"You're haughty, lady," he proclaimed.
"Is love what you disdain to feel,
so that my praises and appeal
don't make you act the way I want?
True, women get too arrogant
when men appeal and praise them highly,
while often men who scold them vilely
will find them in a better mood.
I pledge my word with certitude,
if my intent you mean to flout,
swords promptly will be taken out,
and, right or wrong, I now maintain
I'll take your lord and have him slain
at once, before your very eyes."
"Sir," coaxed Enide, "you can devise
a better plan than you have said.
If you commanded him struck dead,
then you would be a wicked traitor.

But, sir, compose yourself, for later
your will and pleasure I shall do.
I'm yours; I must belong to you,
and you can seize me for your own.
My words were in no way high-flown
but tests to settle in my mind
the question whether I could find
in you a lover true of heart,
but I would never have you start
a course of action so malicious.
My lord is not the least suspicious,
and if you were to kill him thus,
you would be very treacherous,
and I should be much criticized.
The deed was done as I advised,
all in the land would say in scorn.
Be at repose until the morn,
and, when my lord would rise from bed,
then you can do him harm more dread
without reproval or reproach."
The heart thought words mouth would not broach.
"Sir," pled Enide, "believe in me;
you must not act impatiently.
Tomorrow, in the morning light,
send troops out, man-at-arms and knight,
and have me taken by force hence.
My lord will come to my defense;
his nerve and pride are manifest.
Seize him in earnest or in jest,
so he is incapacitated,
or order him decapitated.
I've led this life interminably;
I don't enjoy the company
of my own lord, I would not lie.
So we have reached this point, whereby

I should adore to feel you in
a bed beside me, skin to skin;
be certain that my love is won."
The count said in reply "Well done!
You were born lucky, I should deem.
You will be held in great esteem."
"Sir, I believe what I have heard,
yet I would have you pledge your word
that you will hold me very dear,
or I shall think you insincere."
The count said, glad and joyous now:
"I pledge my word to you and vow
that I shall do all you desire
and you shall have all you require.
You have my loyal word as count,
so have no fears on that account."
His word she did indeed accept,
but it meant little more except
to save her lord from such dire fate.
She knew how to intoxicate
a fool by words when of such mind.
Far better tell a lie than find
her lord in pieces from sword blows.
From next to her, the count arose.
Scant use the pledge he had extended.
One hundred times the count commended
the lady to the Lord God's care.
Now, Erec was quite unaware
his death was what they had discussed,
but God may aid him, and I trust
and I have confidence in Him.
Now Erec's peril was most grim,
and yet he was oblivious.
The count was truly villainous
to think he could take Erec's life,

with him defenseless, and his wife.
The rogue took leave and left the place
with: "I commend you to God's grace."
"Sir," Erec answered, "and I you."
Then came the parting of the two.
A great part of the night had gone.
A bedroom, quiet and withdrawn,
had two beds placed upon the floor.
In one went Erec, and, heartsore,
within the other lay Enide,
enraged and sorrowful indeed.
That night no slumber did she take;
her lord's case kept her wide awake,
for she could clearly recognize,
from what had passed before her eyes,
the count was full of villainy.
She knew, if he won mastery
of her own lord, it was conclusive
the count was bound to be abusive,
and Erec surely would be dead.
Enide could not be comforted;
throughout the night she stayed awake,
but if she could, before daybreak,
if her lord took her word as fact,
they would be set to leave and packed.
On no account could count coerce;
she'd not be his, he'd not be hers.
But Erec slept, his sleep profound,
the whole night through, long, safe, and sound,
until the dawn was very near,
and then Enide saw, very clear,
she could be getting a late start.
Toward her lord she was kind of heart,
a lady true, solicitous;
her heart was not duplicitous.

She made her preparations, dressed,
came to her lord, and broke his rest.
"Ah, sir," she cried, "oh, mercy me!
You must arise immediately,
for you have fallen prey to treason,
without misconduct or good reason.
The count has proved himself a traitor.
If you are found here any later,
you never will escape from him,
for he will tear you limb from limb.
Since he wants me, his hate is growing.
May it please God, who is all-knowing,
you won't be captured or interred.
Had I not given him my word
to be his mistress and his wife,
last night you would have lost your life.
You'll see the count soon here again;
if he finds you, he'll have you slain.
He'll want to keep me for his own."
What Erec heard had clearly shown
his wife was true to him foremost.
He told her, "Lady, have our host
awakened promptly; make it clear
that he must come directly here.
Get our mounts saddled up to go;
the treason started long ago!"
The mounts were saddled, word she sent.
Their host asked Erec what it meant,
for Erec hastily had dressed.
He asked: "Sir, why are you so pressed
to rise as soon as you have done,
before there is a glimpse of sun
or sign that daylight will appear?"
In explanation of his gear,
said Erec, he was on his way

to travel far a lengthy day,
and his concern had grown immense.
He told his host: "Of my expense
till now your reckoning is none.
Both good and honor you have done;
there is great merit in such deeds,
so call me quits for seven steeds.
I brought them with me; keep them all.
I hope you do not think it small,
a gift that I cannot increase
not even by a halter piece."
The burgher's gladness was complete,
so he bowed over to his feet
and thanked him greatly in reply.
Then Erec mounted, said good-bye,
and toward the roadway turned his steed.
He kept admonishing Enide
that if she happened to behold
the least thing, not to be so bold
as to apprise him of such sights.
At that same time, one hundred knights
burst in the house, with arms appointed,
and all of them were disappointed
to find no Erec thereabouts.
So by the lady, with no doubts,
the count knew he had been deceived,
and all, once that the count perceived
the hoofprints, got upon the trail.
The count, continuing to rail
at Erec, could he be attained,
made threats he would not be restrained
from promptly having Erec's head.
"May that man's future fate be dread
who fails to spur with all his might!
The man who can behead the knight

and give me one I so detest
3530 I shall consider serves me best."
Then all were filled with rage and spleen
3532 toward someone who had never seen
a or done them harm by words or deeds,
b and rapidly upon their steeds
3533 they followed him in hot pursuit.
They sighted Erec on his route
before his way grew forested.
One separated, sped ahead,
then all the others were in motion.
Enide heard clatter and commotion;
their arms and steeds were audible,
3540 and she could see the vale was full.
On seeing they were on their way,
she found she could not help but say:
"Alack, my lord!" she cried, "alack!
This count is mounting an attack
to come for you with such a host!
Ride on, sir, do your uttermost
until we are within that copse.
We can escape soon, I have hopes;
they still have very far to go.
3550 But if our pace remains this slow,
you can't escape, you'll be undone;
this match is scarcely one to one."
"Now, your esteem for me is scant,"
he said, "my words irrelevant.
There's no request that I can phrase
to get you to amend your ways!
If God allows me, by His grace,
to manage to escape this place,
you will pay dearly for your part,
3560 unless I have a change of heart."
He turned at once, and it was clear

the seneschal was coming near
upon a strong, swift horse's back.
The steward started to attack
four bow shots' distance from his bout.
He had not lent his weapons out,
for he was very well equipped.
By Erec's count, he was outstripped
one hundred men in this assault,
so he decided he should halt
the rider who was giving chase.
They moved together, face to face,
and on each other's shields scored hits
with two sharp, pointed lance iron bits.
When Erec's strong steel lance was stuck
in his foe's body when he struck,
his shield and mail weren't worth a swath
of finest dark blue silken cloth.
Then, spurring forward, came the count;
according to the tale's account
a good and strong knight as a rule,
who wore no armor, like a fool,
because he had such confidence
in shield, lance, and his competence;
he had no other arms but these.
He showed great nerve and expertise;
he spurred before his men and sped
more than nine arpents* on ahead.
When Erec saw the count, he turned.
The count, out front, was unconcerned.
The pair collided and they sparred.
The count struck to the chest so hard,
had Erec's feet not firmly gripped
his stirrup rings, they would have slipped.
As Erec's wooden shield was split,
the steel lance tip leapt out through it

toward Erec's chest; his iron mail
was costly mesh that did not fail
and saved him from the death blow given,
for not a chain of mesh was riven.
The count was strong; his lance was smashed.
But when the blow of Erec's crashed
on yellow-painted shield and guard,
he stuck his lance more than one yard
inside the rib cage of the count
and knocked him senseless from his mount.
Then Erec slipped off and sojourned
no longer in that place, but turned.
At highest speed he spurred ahead
straight where the path was forested
and by the forest was concealed.
The fallen lay upon the field;
the others halted at that place
above their men and swore to chase
and spur toward Erec furiously
until two days elapsed, or three,
and he was caught and taken dead.
The count heard what the others said;
his ribs were hurt where they were hit.
He straightened up a little bit
and slightly opened his closed eyes.
He saw how bad an enterprise
he had begun by his attack
and made his group of knights draw back.
"My lords," to all of them he told,
"let none of you dare be so bold,
though strong, weak, high or lowly bred,
as to proceed one step ahead.
All must return immediately,
for I have acted boorishly.
I'm sorry I was villainous.

Most noble, wise, and courteous
the lady was who tricked and tamed me.
The beauty she possessed inflamed me,
and my desire was so untoward,
I wanted both to kill her lord
and then to take her by brute force.
I earned misfortune; in due course
misfortune came upon me later,
for I was foolish and a traitor,
disloyal, out of my right mind.
No knight of mother born you'll find
to be a better knight than he.
He'll have no trouble caused by me
while I can make that my concern.
Now I command you to return."
Regretful, they departed all.
They carried off the seneschal.
They laid the count upon his shield;
he long survived, for he was healed
of his wound dealt by Erec's lance.
Thus Erec won deliverance.

GUIVRET THE SMALL

THEN, at a gallop, Erec tried
a path with hedges on each side,
and, spurring, down the path they tore,
he and his wife who rode before.
They rode and traveled far afield
until they reached a new-mown field.
Emerging from a fenced-in place,
they found a drawbridge set in place
before a lofty tower, all bounded
by walls, and which a moat surrounded

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before a lofty tower, all bounded
by walls, and which a moat surrounded

that was constructed deep and wide.
They crossed the bridge, but, a short ride
beyond the drawbridge and the moat,
the master of the tower took note
from high up in that citadel.
I know about him and can tell
his frame was small in every part,
but he was bold and stout of heart.
When he saw Erec passing there,
the lord came down the tower stair
and had the saddle that was graced
with golden lions brought and placed
upon a mighty sorrel steed.
He gave commands that he would need
shield, stiff strong lance, and polished blade
and that he wished to be arrayed
in triple-woven greaves, bright mail,
and helmet gleaming bright and pale,
for he had seen a warrior
pass through his wooden barrier.
He'd tire this knight whom he accosted
or fight until he was exhausted.
They did as he required and brought
the horse out promptly, as he sought.
One squire led out the saddled mount
by bridle for the knight to mount;
another brought the arms that shone.
The knight went out the gate alone
and rode as fast as he could ride,
without companions at his side.
As Erec followed a descent,
the knight immediately went
downhill and rode at highest speed
upon a spirited, proud steed,
which was so noisy as it rushed

that underneath its hoofs it crushed
stones finer than a mill grinds wheat.
In all directions from its feet,
where its hoofs struck and left their marks,
they cast off glowing, burning sparks,
so all four hoofs the charger raised
gave the impression that they blazed.
Enide heard noises as he coursed
and nearly swooned and was unhorsed.
Her body did not have one vein
from which blood did not start to drain.
Upon her palfrey, still in place,
she turned as pale and white of face
as if she were already dead
because her lord, she knew with dread,
would threaten her and reprimand
and scold and give her his command
to hold her tongue and speak no more.
She dared not tell what lay in store.
She did not know the lesser ill:
ought she to speak or else keep still?
Upon reflection, spent and weak,
she tried to force herself to speak.
Her tongue moved often, by her choice,
and yet she could not find a voice
because in fear she clenched her teeth
and kept the words enclosed beneath.
Her mouth was closed, her teeth were gritted,
so not one word would be emitted,
and her self-torture was so hard,
while her conflicting feelings warred.
She said: "It certainly is clear
that if I lose my lord right here
the loss will cause me greatest pain.
Then shall I speak out, clear and plain?

No. Why not speak? I do not dare;
the temper of my lord will flare,
and, when his wrath begins to rush,
I'll be abandoned in this brush,
alone and lost, in wretched state,
and even more unfortunate.
Unfortunate? What do I care?
I shall have sorrow and despair
enough to spend my life bereft
if my lord suddenly has left
this place with injuries so grave
that they will take him to his grave.
Unless I warn of what's ahead,
this spurring knight will have him dead
before he even grows suspicious.
The knight's intentions seem malicious.
Alas, I've waited here too long.
Although he firmly called it wrong,
I shall warn him of this onslaught.
I see my lord so lost in thought
he has forgotten his own being;
I ought to tell what I am seeing."
She told him, and his threats were curt,
but he would never cause her hurt
and knew, for all his menacing,
she loved him more than anything,
and loved her too with all his might.
Then Erec moved against the knight,
who summoned him, and, face to face,
the knights met at the drawbridge base,
rode forth while challenges were cried,
and, using their full force, applied
hard blows with lance's iron tips.
The shields were not worth two bark strips,
which hung suspended at their necks.

The leather broke, the boards were wrecks,
the hauberk mail broke from the cuts;
both knights were wounded to the guts
by irons of the lances held;
the chargers that they rode were felled.
No deadly wounds were dealt this bout,
for both the lords were strong and stout.
They threw their lances on the field
and drew their swords from scabbard-shield.
Each knight was thoroughly enraged
and struck and pressed as they engaged.
They gave no quarter to their marks.
The heavy blows sent flaring sparks
from helmets as the sword blades hit.
The shields were pounded till they split.
The sword blows that they struck afresh
in many places reached bare flesh;
they weakened more as they attacked.
Had either sword remained intact,
each fighter held clenched in his fist,
they'd not have drawn back to desist;
they'd not have called the battle done,
till death had come to either one.
Enide, who watched the knights contest,
became so terribly distressed
her mental balance nearly failed.
Whoever saw the way she wailed,
eyes flowing, hair pulled out by strands,
the way she wept and wrung her hands,
could see a loyal lady there.
Not to have pitied her despair
would have been terribly perverse.
They traded blows till none from tierce.
The knights fought on, and both of them
struck from their helmets stone and gem.

Their battle was so fierce a fray,
no man could tell in any way
with certainty which warrior
appeared to be superior.
But Erec strove and vied with pluck.
He placed a sword blow so he struck
the knight's helm straight down to mail hood.
The knight reeled from it but withstood
the blow and did not fall from it.
The knight rushed Erec, and he hit
so hard a blow upon the rim
of Erec's shield, when striking him,
that he withdrew a broken blade:
a precious sword that was well made.
The knight beheld his sword in two
and, in exasperation, threw
the fist-clenched fragment that he held
as far as it could be propelled.
Then he withdrew and felt afraid,
for no great effort can be made
by any warrior who lacks
a sword in combat or attacks.
When Erec chased the knight, he pled
for God's sake not to be struck dead.
"Oh, noble knight, act mercifully!
Do not be fierce or cruel toward me.
Since my sword failed me in my need,
you've strength and power to proceed
to kill or capture me alive.
There's no defense I can contrive."
Then Erec said, "Since you so pray,
admit that you have lost the fray,
and do so unreservedly.
You shall not be attacked by me,
if you will promise to submit."

The knight delayed admitting it.
When Erec saw his foe delayed,
to make him even more afraid
he started rushing at the lord
while brandishing his naked sword.
In fearfulness the knight appealed:
"Have mercy, sir, because I yield,
since it cannot be otherwise."
"You shall do more that I devise;
I'll set you free on this condition:
tell me your name and your position,
and in return I'll tell you mine."
"Sir," he replied, "your words are fine.
I hold this land as king and sire,
and my liege men are men of Eire
and pay me tribute, one and all.
I bear the name Guivret the Small.
I'm powerful; my wealth is grand;
in all directions in this land
there is no baron on my border
who disobeys me when I order
or does not fully do my pleasure.
My neighbors dare not take my measure,
however brave they are or proud.
Now I should like to be allowed
to be your friend from this time forward."
"I am a very noble lord,"
said Erec, "I can proudly claim
I've Erec, King Lac's son, for name.
My father, king of Further Wales,
has a dominion that entails
rich cities, fair halls, strong towns, more
than any king or emperor
except King Arthur, him alone.
He's the exception: it's well known

no one could ever be his peer."
Guivret was most amazed to hear.
"Amazing words I hear employed.
I could not be more overjoyed
to meet you, sir, in consequence.
You can have every confidence
in my possessions and domain,
however long you may remain;
I'll do you honor and accord
that you may be my overlord,
accepting even that condition.
We both have need of a physician.
I have a dwelling where I stay,
not six or seven leagues away,
where I will take you," he revealed,
"and we can let our wounds be healed."
Said Erec, "I appreciate
the offers I have heard you state
and thank you, but I shall not go.
But if you ever come to know
I need assistance, my request
is only, should I be hard pressed,
in need of aid, and you hear news,
do not forget me or refuse."
"Sir," he replied, "my word I give
that just as long as I shall live,
if you need aid, aid shall be lent
as soon as I can have it sent
and come to do what I can do."
"I wish to ask no more of you.
You've promised much, and I contend
that you are both my lord and friend,
if words are equalled by the deed."
They kissed and hugged, now well agreed,
and never did so fierce a fray

conclude in such a gentle way.
As love and decency demands,
each of the knights cut long wide bands
from off the ends of his chemise
and bound the other's injuries.

KING ARTHUR'S COURT

WITH each one's bandages in place,
they left each other in God's grace.
Their separation thus ensued:
Guivret returned in solitude,
and down the road of his appointment
went Erec, in great need of ointment
to medicate his injuries.
They reached a meadow next to trees,
with Erec keeping at his ride.
The forest that it lay beside
was full of fallow deer, stags, hinds,
roe deer, wild animals, all kinds
of other game that could be seen.
That day King Arthur and the queen
and barons came there, the elite
of lords he numbered in his suite.
The king's intention was to be
within the wood four days or three
for sport and pleasure of the chase.
He'd ordered tents brought to that place,
pavilions also he desired.
Inside the king's tent, deeply tired,
went Sir Gawain, who'd been astride
his charger for a lengthy ride.
A hornbeam grew before the tent,
where he had left accoutrement:

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A hornbeam grew before the tent,
where he had left accoutrement:

upon the tree his shield was hung;
strap over branch, his ash lance swung;
to it was hitched the Gringalet,*
his bridle on, his saddle set.
The charger was tied up that way
at the approach of steward Kay;*
the seneschal came up with speed.
Impulsively, he seized the steed
and mounted it, as if in jest,
and there was no one to protest.
The shield and lance were swinging free
and close at hand upon the tree.
Kay seized them and began to sally
downhill and through a little valley;
he galloped on the Gringalet.
By chance it happened Erec met
with Kay and saw the seneschal,
the arms, and steed, and knew them all.
Since Erec's weapons did not show
distinctive marks, Kay did not know
who he was in this circumstance.
So many blows from sword and lance
had Erec taken on his shield,
the paint had chipped away and peeled.
The lady, in her clever way,
to stay unrecognized by Kay,
in order to avoid detection,
pretending that she sought protection
from heat or dust, was quick to place
her wimple over brow and face.
Kay rode up fast, seized Erec's reins
immediately, and took no pains
to greet him, but with arrogance,
without permitting his advance,
said: "Knight, I want to know your name

and learn the place from where you came."
"You are a fool to use restraint,"
protested Erec in complaint.
"You'll not learn what you ask today."
"Don't be annoyed with me," said Kay.
"I ask it for your benefit.
I'm certain that you are unfit;
you have been wounded and are sore.
Tonight take lodging at my door.
If you will come with me instead,
I'll see that you are cosseted,
an honored and a cherished guest,
because you are in need of rest.
King Arthur and the queen are near
within a small wood close by here
and housed in tents of every size,
so in good faith I do advise:
come back with me to where I've been,
so you can see the king and queen,
who will rejoice because you came
and show you honor and acclaim."
Then Erec said, "You've spoken well,
but I shall not go where you dwell.
You have no knowledge of my need,
and I have further to proceed.
Let go of me; I won't delay.
There still is daylight left today."
"Your answer is inanely wrong
when you refuse to come along.
You'll wish you weren't so troublesome,
for I believe you both will come,"
said Kay, "you and your wife besides,
the way the priest to synod rides,
willingly or against his will.
Tonight you will be treated ill

a (if my advice is given heed)
b unless you're well known there indeed.
Come instantly; you are detained!",
words Erec utterly disdained.
"Sir, you are on a foolish course
to lead me after you by force.
There was no challenge that I heard
when you seized me; I say you erred.
I felt quite safe in your regard,
and therefore I was off my guard."
With hand on sword, he spoke out plain
and told Kay: "Sir, release my rein!
Get out of here! It's evident
you're arrogant and insolent.
I'll strike at you, as you will find,
if you keep dragging me behind.
Let go!" Kay rode across the field
more than a furlong's length, then wheeled
and challenged Erec like a man
immensely evil in his plan.
They hurled against each other, but
first Erec turned his lance so butt
was forward, iron bit behind.
He was so generous of mind
because Kay wore no armor, though
he gave Kay's shield so hard a blow
where in its breadth it was most ample
he banged the shield against Kay's temple
and pressed his arm against his chest.
Splayed on the ground Kay came to rest.
Then Erec sought and seized his steed
and passed its rein on to Enide.
He meant to keep it, but Kay's plea—
and he knew much of flattery—
was Erec should be generous,

and Kay was most solicitous.
"God save me," in a coaxing tone
Kay said, "this steed is not my own;
it's owned by one who most abounds
in prowess in the whole world's bounds:
the lord Gawain, the bold of heart.
I tell you this much for his part:
send him his charger and accrue
great honor thus by what you do.
You would act well and wisely, sir,
and I shall be your messenger."
So Erec said: "Sir, take the horse;
return it to him in due course.
Since Sir Gawain can claim this steed,
it's one I have no right to lead."
Kay took the charger and remounted.
He reached the king's tent and recounted
the truth and kept none of it hidden.
Before the king Gawain was bidden.
The king said: "Nephew, dear Gawain,
be your most polished and urbane.
Pursue the knight immediately
and make inquiries amiably
of his affairs and situation.
Have not the slightest hesitation;
use what persuasion can be tried
to bring him back here at your side."
Gawain got on his Gringalet,
two youths pursued, and they soon met
with Erec, as the king advised,
although he went unrecognized.
Gawain hailed Erec and was greeted,
and when their greetings were completed,
the noble lord Gawain expressed
with open candor his request.

"King Arthur," he began to say,
"has sent me to you on this way.
The queen and king send greetings and,
at their request and their command,
would have you come with them for solace,
inspired by helpfulness, not malice.
They are not very far from here."
Said Erec, "I extend sincere
thanks to the king and queen together
and you, whom I find altogether
a well-bred man and well disposed.
Although I do feel indisposed
from wounds in body dealt of late,
I still refuse to deviate
for lodging from my chosen way.
You have no reason to delay.
I thank you kindly, get you hence."
Gawain possessed vast common sense,
so he withdrew and whispered low
in one youth's ear that he should go
at once and make the king aware
he should immediately take care
to strike his tents and come ahead
some three or four leagues, and then spread
across the roadway and commence
to pitch and raise his linen tents.
"That's how the king must lodge tonight
to meet and shelter the best knight,
in my opinion, ever seen,
who for some reason is not keen
to detour from the way he chose
for lodgings where he might repose."
The youth conveyed his message thence.
The king directly struck his tents.
Tents struck, packhorses with the load,

the party traveled down the road.
King Arthur mounted Aubagu.
On a Norse palfrey, white of hue,
the queen was mounted afterward.
The lord Gawain kept working hard
at causing Erec to delay.
"I traveled further yesterday,"
said Erec, "than I now can come.
Sir, you are being troublesome.
You have disrupted a good part
of my day, sir; now let me start."
The lord Gawain replied thereto:
"I wish to travel on with you
a little more, if it's all right.
It is a lengthy time till night."
So back and forth in talk they switched
until the tents had all been pitched,
and Erec, as they came in view,
had lodgings, as he clearly knew.
"Aha, Gawain, aha!" said he,
"Your cleverness amazes me.
You've slowed me by your clever mind,
and since I was thus kept behind,
at once I shall tell you my name;
in hiding it there is no aim,
for I am Erec and contend
I was your comrade and your friend."
Gawain heard all that Erec said.
He neared him, raised his helm from head,
and then his ventail he unlaced.
For joy, he hugged him and embraced,
and Erec hugged him for his part.
Gawain then drew himself apart
from Erec and declared: "My lord
will gladly hear you are restored.

My lord and lady will rejoice
at news I'll ride ahead to voice.
First I must welcome to this place,
pay my respects to, and embrace
my lady and your wife, Enide.
My lady queen has felt great need
to see her since she's been away;
I heard her say so yesterday."
At once Gawain drew alongside,
and with good manners she replied,
as he asked whether she felt frail
or personally were sound and hale,
"No pain or grief have I deplored,
just deep concern about my lord,
and I do feel dismay for him;
he scarcely has one unhurt limb."
Gawain replied: "I am concerned.
His face shows clearly he has turned
washed out and pallid; I was pained
to see him look so pale and drained.
I nearly wept, he was so spent,
but joy extinguishes lament,
and since I was rejoicing so,
I totally forgot my woe.
At a slow amble you proceed,
and I shall ride ahead with speed
and shall inform the queen and king
that both of you are following.
I know each one, when they so learn,
will feel great joy at your return."
He left and sought the monarch's tent.
"Now, sire, you both may be content,
my lady may take joy in life,
for here comes Erec and his wife."
For joy the king leapt to his feet.

"My happiness is now complete.
No news could ever be related
to make me feel as much elated."
The king went out his tent door, and
the pair found Erec close at hand.
When Erec saw the king was bound
to see him, he got down to ground;
Enide, dismounted, stood in place.
The king hailed them with an embrace,
and then the queen, with gentleness,
gave them a kiss and a caress.
They all rejoiced; no one did not.
The courtiers even, on the spot,
removed his armor and were pained
to see the wounds he had sustained,
and for the king and retinue
joy turned to wrath. The king thereto
sent for a salve, one he declared
his sister Morgan had prepared.
The salve that Morgan, its endower,
had given Arthur had such power,
whatever wound one might anoint,
upon the nerve or at the joint,
within one week would be revealed
to be completely sound and healed,
if once a day it were anointed
with that same salve the king appointed.
They brought the ointment as he pleased;
the salve left Erec greatly eased.
When they had washed his wounded flesh,
they salved and bandaged him afresh.
The king led Erec and Enide
in his own chamber and decreed,
for love of them, that he desired,
until fifteen full days expired,

to stay within the forest bound
till Erec was all healed and sound.
He thanked the king, but he maintained:
"Sire, not one wound I have sustained
is causing suffering so acute
that I desire to leave my route.
No one can cause me to delay;
tomorrow I'll be on my way.
I'll wait not longer but be gone
when I have seen the light of dawn."
The king heard that and shook his head.
"It's most unfortunate," he said,
"you are not willing to remain,
for I well know you are in pain.
Remaining here would be more wise,
for if you met with your demise
within this forest where you came,
dear friend, it would be such a shame.
Stay till you heal; take my advice."
Said Erec: "Now that will suffice.
I've undertaken an endeavor,
and I shall not remain, not ever."
The king could hear there was no way
he could prevail on him to stay,
so he ceased urging, to declare
they should set tables and prepare
for supper and be quick to cook;
a task the young men undertook.
The night was Saturday; the dishes
that they consumed were fruit and fishes;
the pike and salmon, perch and trout,
then raw and cooked pears were brought out,
and afterward, without delay,
the tablecloths were sent away.

The king held Erec dear and said
he'd have him sleep alone in bed
with none to share in Erec's ease
who might touch Erec's injuries.
That night he was well lodged indeed.
In an adjacent room, Enide
slept by the queen with, over her,
a coverlet of ermine fur,
in deep repose, and did not wake
until the morning at daybreak.
That next day Erec rose at dawn,
and he prepared to travel on.
He ordered saddles on each steed
and had his weapons brought with speed.
Youths brought the weapons at a run.
The king and knights had all begun
again to urge him to remain,
but all their urging was in vain.
There was no way he would be kept.
You would have seen the way all wept
and raised lament as loud and dread
as if he were already dead.
So Erec armed, Enide arose;
all grieved, for they did not suppose
to see them more once they departed.
All vacated their tents and started
to keep them company and sent
for mounts to follow where they went.
"Please," Erec told their company,
"do not proceed one step with me.
I thank you very much; abide."
His steeds were brought for Erec's ride.
He mounted with precipitance,
and he took up his shield and lance,

commending all to Heaven's care
and so commended by all there.
Enide on horseback, off they ventured.

CADOC OF CABRUEL AND TWO GIANTS

THEY reached a forest, which they entered,
and did not stop till nearly prime.
They rode along until the time
they heard, a long way off, a maid
cry out in direst need of aid,
and Erec could both hear and know
her outcry was the voice of woe,
which sought assistance in its need.
At once he called out to Enide.
"My lady," he began to speak,
"a maiden has begun to shriek
while she is passing through this wood,
which means, as I have understood,
she needs assistance and protection.
I want to search in this direction
and find out what her need may be.
Dismount right here and wait for me.
Remain here while I go ahead."
"Most willingly, my lord," she said.
Alone he left; alone she stayed.
He went until he found the maid.
Beneath the trees and forest's cover
she wandered, crying for her lover.
He had been kidnapped by two giants
who were abusing him like tyrants.
She wrung her hands in her distress
and wandered tearing at her dress
and at her tender, reddened face.

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When Erec saw her in that place,
amazed, he asked to be allowed
to know what made her shriek so loud.
The maiden wept and moaned and sighed.
"My lord," she sighed as she replied,
"no wonder I lament and cry,
because I wish that I could die.
My life I do not love or prize.
My sweetheart is a captive prize
of two cruel giants, both of these
his wicked, mortal enemies.
Oh, Heavens! What can I contrive
to help the finest knight alive,
the noblest and most generous?
His plight is truly perilous.
Today's the last he will draw breath.
He'll die a wrongful, shameful death.
Good knight, for God's sake, I commend
and beg you to assist my friend.
If you can help, when you've begun
you won't have very far to run;
they are still well within your reach."
"Since you implore me and beseech,
I'll follow on the giants' trail
and trust me, maiden, without fail,
for I shall do all that I can.
I may be captured with the man
or set him free to give to you,
but if he can survive those two
until I find them, have no doubt
that I will surely test them out."
The answer that the maiden gave
was: "Noble knight, I'll be your slave,*
if my dear friend can be restored.
Now I commend you to the Lord.

I thank you; do make haste. Godspeed!"
"Tell me which way did they proceed?"
"Here are clear hoofprints and the track."
He galloped after on horseback
and told her to await him there.
Commending him to Heaven's care,
the maiden prayed God soft and low
by His commandment to bestow
the strength on Erec to contend
and rout those hostile toward her friend.
To find the giants, Erec traced
all tracks they left and, spurring, chased
and followed them as he was urged
until they nearly had emerged
from forest trees and could be viewed.
He saw the knight completely nude,
unshod, and on a nag, bereft
of clothes like someone caught in theft;
he had his hands and feet fast bound.
The giants did not tote around
a lance or cutting sword or shield;
each had a scourge and club to wield.
They had already used their whips
to slash the knight with blows and clips,
so on his back the flesh was shown
to have deep slashes to the bone.
Along his ribs and flanks the course
of blood flowed down so that the horse
was wholly bloodied to below
the belly from the crimson flow.
Quite solitary, Erec pressed
ahead and followed them, distressed
about the knight, whom he could see
mistreated so contemptibly.
He overtook them, knight and boor,

between two woods upon a moor
and asked: "Lords, what is his offense?
Why treat him with such violence
that you two lead him like a thief?
You are so cruel; it's my belief
the way you lead him you are dealing
with him like someone caught at stealing.
It is despicable to strip
and bind up hand and foot and whip
a knight without the least remorse.
I am not asking it by force,
but rather, hand the knight to me
from decency and courtesy."
They said, "What is your interest?
To think we'll do as you request
on anything means you're deranged.
If you don't like it, get it changed."
"I do not like it; I'll dispute
your taking him along your route,
and since you leave me free to fight,
whoever gets him keeps the knight.
Withdraw or else heed my defiance;
you won't go further with him, giants,
until we all have come to blows."
"Sir, you're a fool if you suppose
you ought to fight us; what is more,
were there not one of you but four,
your strength would prove to be as sham
as two wolves challenged by one lamb."
"Who knows the outcome of our match?
There will be many larks to catch
if sky falls down and earth melts down.
Some boasters merit scant renown.
I'm coming for you; on your guard."
The giants had their hands clenched hard,

around the huge square clubs they held;
their strength and malice were unquelled.
At them came Erec, lance at rest,
and he feared neither, unimpressed
by menaces or arrogance.
He struck the first one with his lance
through eye and brain, so at neck nape
he made both blood and brains escape
and ooze behind the giant's head;
his heart stopped beating; he fell dead.
The other giant saw him killed
and rightly was appalled and chilled,
so he sought vengeance out of spite.
Since he meant to strike Erec right
on his bare head, with one hard drubbing,
he raised his weapon for the clubbing,
a blow two-handed, unconcealed,
that Erec took upon his shield.
The blow the giant, club upraised,
dealt Erec left him wholly dazed
and staggering and all but downed.
He nearly fell from horse to ground.
But Erec used his shield as cover.
The giant, starting to recover,
meant to repeat a blow so dread
by clubbing hard on Erec's head.
But Erec had his sword drawn out,
and he attacked next in their bout,
which did not serve the giant well,
for Erec split him from the skull
to saddlebow; the giant spilled
his guts to ground as he was killed.
The giant's body fell splayed, left
split in two halves as it was cleft.
The knight wept in his joyous mood

and gave God praise and gratitude
for sending aid in his distress.
Then Erec freed him, had him dress,
got him outfitted properly,
and asked the knight who he might be.
He had him mount one horse and lead,
in his right hand, the other steed.
The knight responded: "Noble knight,
you have become my lord, by right.
I wish to make you be my lord,
which I must rightfully accord
because you saved me from the dead.
My tortured soul had nearly sped.
Sir, tell me by what godsent chance
you came to bring deliverance
and save me by your valiancy
from the hands of my enemy?
I owe you homage and would pay.
I shall go with you from this day
and serve you as my lord forever."
Thus Erec saw he would endeavor
to do what service he could find
and visibly was of this mind,
in any way he could attend,
So Erec said: "Your service, friend,
is not one that I wish to claim,
but you should know well that I came
to help you at your friend's request.
I found your sweetheart much distressed
within this wood, disconsolate
and wailing at your sorry fate,
her heart from grief about to rift;
I shall bestow you as her gift;
I'll reunite you on my own,
then travel on my way alone,

and you will not go on with me.
I do not want your company,
but I do wish to know your name."
"Sir," he replied, "it's all the same.
Since you would have my name revealed,
4488 it ought not to be kept concealed.
a The name Cadoc of Cabruel
b is how I'm called, you may know well.
c But if I must leave you and go,
d if it can be, I wish to know
e what land you claim and who you are.
f Wherever can I search afar
g and find you when I go from here?"
h "Friend, I shall never make that clear,
i and never mention it again.
j To learn my name and my domain
4489 and honor me in any way
4490 proceed at once without delay
to find my lord, who is King Arthur,
for I believe it is no farther
than five short leagues to reach the site
where he now hunts with all his might
within this forest close at hand.
Go give the king to understand
you are presented and are sent
by one whom last night in his tent
he joyfully received and pressed
4500 to take night's lodging as his guest.
With him, make sure that you review
the pain from which I rescued you
and your sweetheart whom you escort.
Since I am greatly loved at court,
you serve me with great deference
by making such a reference.
There, ask them my identity;

or you won't know who I may be."
Cadoc replied: "Sir, I have planned
to do whatever you command,
and, never fear, I shall go there
and shall attentively declare
the truth about your battling
on my account before the king."
Conversing, on the path they stayed
until they came upon the maid
where Erec had her stay behind.
The maid was overjoyed to find
her love returning to that place.
She'd never thought to see his face.
So Erec came up to present
her sweetheart by the hand. "Lament
no longer, maid," he said, "for here
is your love full of joy and cheer."
She answered most perceptively:
"Sir, you have won both him and me;
we both ought to belong to you
to serve and honor you as due.
Could anyone, though, find a way
to compensate you and repay
one-half of your benevolence?"
"I ask you for no recompense,"
responded Erec, "I commend
you both to Heaven, my sweet friend.
I feel I have delayed too long."
He turned his horse and rode along;
as fast as he could ride he raced.
Cadoc of Cabruel retraced
another way, he and his maid,
so that the news could be conveyed
to both King Arthur and the queen,
while Erec galloped hard between

that place and where Enide still stood,
concerned about the likelihood
that Erec had abandoned her,
which she was ready to aver,
while he was very much afraid
that someone might have come there, made
Enide submit to his direction,
and led her off in deep subjection,
so in returning he was fleet.
But that day Erec felt great heat;
his armor caused him so much pain,
his gashes opened up again,
and all his bandages were split;
they did not staunch his wounds one bit
for all the time that he rode straight
to where he left Enide to wait.

COUNT ORINGLE OF LIMORS

THOUGH she saw Erec joyfully,
she did not know what agony
he suffered, and misunderstood.
His body was all bathed in blood;
at times his failing heart stood still.
As he came riding down a hill,
in a collapse he could not check
he slumped upon his horse's neck.
He tried to rise, fell in midair,
left saddlebows and saddle bare,
and passed out, like a lifeless man.
Tremendous sorrowing began;
Enide saw Erec senseless, falling,
and found the sight of it appalling.
She ran to him like one bereaved

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who did not hide how much she grieved,
and at the breast she tore her dress
completely in her great distress.
She clawed her tender face, tore strands
of hair, cried out, and wrung her hands.
"Oh, God! Dear sweet lord, why prolong
my life and let me live so long?
Death, come and kill me, come with speed!"*
When she had said these words, Enide
fell fainting over Erec's frame.
When she revived, she said in blame:
"Poor, sorrowful Enide, alas!
I've brought my own lord's death to pass.
My folly lay behind the kill,
because he would be living still
had I not spoken and reproved
with words so he was hurt and moved,
from my own folly and defiance.
More have regretted speech than silence;
a fruitful silence harms no man.
I've proved it many ways and can
aver that it withstood the test."
She sat before her lord to rest,
her head upon his knees, and poured
her sorrow out afresh. "My lord,
oh, woe is you!" she said, dejected,
"for in you beauty was reflected,
and in you prowess proven clear.
Nobody ever was your peer
or could be thought your counterpart,
for wisdom gave to you her heart,
and by largess you had been crowned:
without largess none is renowned.
What did I say? How I despise
the words that caused my lord's demise,

the fatal, poisoned words I broached,
for which I ought to be reproached,
and I do recognize and own
the fault is mine and mine alone;
I am the sole cause for complaint."
She swooned and fell back in a faint.
When she arose, she shrieked anew,
"Oh, God! Whatever shall I do?
Why am I living out my days?
Oh, why won't Death, which just delays,
take me at once and have me slain?
Death's treated me with vast disdain
not to have killed me by this time.
I must take vengeance for my crime.
Thus I shall die, though I incur
the wrath of Death, which would prefer
not to accord me its assistance.
I cannot perish by insistence
alone and end my days on earth,
and my complaints are of no worth.
My lord has girded on a sword
that, for his death, is just reward.
My longing, pains, and prayers shall cease."
From scabbard she began to ease
the sword blade and to look at it.
God made Enide delay a bit
because He is so merciful.
While she detailed her sorrowful
emotions and ill fate anew,
a count and his large retinue
approached her, riding at high speed,
for at a distance from Enide
he'd heard her shrieking, unresigned.
God kept the lady well in mind;
she would be dead if not surprised

by that count's followers, who prized
the sword from her, which they replaced
in Erec's scabbard and encased.
The count dismounted and began
to ask about the knight, a plan
to learn from her and to discover
if she had been his wife or lover.
"Both, sir," she said. "I can't reveal
the whole deep sorrow that I feel.
I only wish that I were dead."
The count was comforting and said:
"I beg you, lady, to accord
some mercy to yourself, good Lord!
Though you are mourning as you ought,
you have no need to be distraught,
for still your fortunes may be fair.
Do not turn listless or despair.
Take comfort from some common sense.
God-given joy will soon commence.
Your beauty, which is so refined,
fates you to fortunes that are kind.
I'll marry you and make of you
a countess and a lady too.
Aren't you consoled by such preferment?
I'll have the corpse borne for interment
with honors that are great and rich.
Leave off the senseless grief with which
you are so much preoccupied."
"Sir, go away!" Enide replied.
"Leave me alone, for Heaven's sake!
You have no conquests here to make.
No words or deeds one might employ
could ever lure me back to joy."
The count withdrew at words so bitter
and said: "Let's quickly make a litter

whereon the body we shall bear
and take the lady in our care,
straight to the castle of Limors.
With the corpse buried, in due course
I wish to wed the lady, though
the prospect of it caused her woe.
Such beauty I have never seen
and never felt desire so keen
for any lady. What a find!
Now let us promptly make and bind
a horse-drawn litter as I ask.
Don't treat it like a heavy task!"
Some drew their swords and very soon
produced two poles they'd cut and hewn.
They fastened sticks and, on this rack,
laid Erec out upon his back,
then to each pole they hitched a steed.
Beside the litter rode Enide,
continuing to raise complaints
and falling backward in her faints.
The knights who led her had to hold
the lady up while they consoled
and kept her up upon her horse.
They bore the body to Limors,
and toward the palace his men wended.
Behind, the people all ascended:
knights, ladies, burghers filled the place.
Within the hall, upon a dais,
the men laid out the man who'd died;
his lance and shield were at his side.
The crowd was huge and packed the hall,
and questions came from one and all
what sad phenomenon occurred.
Concurrently, the count conferred
with his own barons privately.

"My lords," he said, "immediately
I am determined to receive
this lady, who, we well perceive,
since she is lovely, wise, and fine,
is of a very noble line.
Nobility and loveliness
show she is worthy to possess
the honors kingdoms might confer
or empires, and I'll be, through her,
not lesser but more glorified.
So send my chaplain to my side
and fetch the lady. For her hand
I'll settle on her half my land
to be her marriage settlement,
if she is willing to consent."
The lords sent word that they expected
the chaplain, as the count directed.
They fetched the lady in due course
and gave her to him by brute force,
for she repeatedly refused,
and yet the count remained enthused
and wed the lady, as he sought.
The steward had the tables brought
with speed and had them set throughout
the palace, and set cooks about
preparing supper, swift and fleet.
It was already time to eat.
Past vespers, on a day in May,
Enide was in acute dismay.
Her sorrow had not lost its hold,
although by turns the count would scold
and coax her in a gentle voice
to make her peace and to rejoice,
and on a faldstool had her seated.
Against her will she was so treated,

for, willy-nilly, there she sat;
before, they set the table flat.
The count was seated opposite,
and he was in an angry fit
he could not comfort her as yet.
"So, lady, now you must forget;
you must abandon this great grief.
In me you can place firm belief
prestige and wealth will be your own,
and certainly you must have known
grief never got a corpse revived.
No one has seen that feat contrived.
Recall your poverty from whence
you've moved on up to affluence.
Once you were poor; now you are rich,
and Fortune was not stingy, which
had such an honor to endow.
You will be called a countess now.
Since it is true your lord has died,
your grief and wrath are justified.
Am I amazed? Not for one trice.
But I am giving you advice,
which is the best advice I know:
now I am married to you, so
you should rejoice and should be glad.
Be careful not to make me mad
and eat, as I encourage you."
"Sir, that I do not care to do.
As long as I shall live, I think
that I shall never eat or drink,
until I first see my lord dine,
whom I see on this dais, supine."
"Lady, that can never be,
and when you speak so foolishly,
you make yourself be thought inane.

If I must warn you once again,
some punishment will be conferred."
She heard his threat without a word,
because she did not care a rap.
The count next gave her face a slap.
She screamed; the barons, when she cried,
reproached the count on every side.
"Desist, sir!" all the lords proclaimed.
"You should be terribly ashamed
about this lady, whom you beat
because she does not wish to eat.
Your slap was churlish and unfair,
for if this lady's in despair
about her lord, whom she sees dead,
no one should say she is misled."
The count replied: "Be silent, sirs!
The lady's mine, and I am hers,
and I shall treat her as I will."
At that Enide could not keep still.
She never would be his, she swore.
The count arose and slapped her more.
She shrieked at him on being hit:
"Alas, I do not care a bit
what you may do or may propose.
I do not fear your threats or blows,
so beat me, go ahead and strike!
You'll never seem so warriorlike
that I'll do any more or less,
not even if you tear and press
my eyes out with your fingers five
or skin and cut me up alive!"
Next Erec came out of his faint
amid this quarrel and complaint,
like someone wakening from slumber.
The crowd around him, and no wonder,

made him feel startled and amazed,
but when he heard his wife's voice raised,
his wrath and sorrow were profound.
He got down from the dais to ground
and drew his sword at once, controlled
by wrath, which made him grow so bold,
and deep love for his wife he felt.
He ran to where he saw her, dealt
the count a head blow, and took pains
to slash through forehead on through brains.
Not one defying word was said.
The blood and brains flew from his head.
Up from the tables barons leapt;
the knights all thought a devil crept
therein and now was thereamong.
No one remained, gray-haired or young,
for all were utterly aghast.
One and another fled as fast
as they could flee, much disconcerted,
and soon the palace was deserted.
All persons there began to shriek:
"Flee! See the corpse!" cried strong and weak.
A crowd formed at the doorway out
with everybody put to rout.
They hit and shoved each one they passed,
and in the crowd he who was last
desired to be the very first,
so all went fleeing and dispersed;
none dared wait for the next one's leaving.
Then Erec sought his shield, retrieving
and strapping it at neck, suspended;
to Erec's lance Enide attended;
and in the courtyard went the pair.
Nobody dared turn toward them there.
The people thought that they were chased

by nothing human but they faced
a fiend or devil that progressed
within the corpse it had possessed.
All fled as Erec chased them there.
Outside the palace in the square
a stable boy had come to lead
a saddled charger: Erec's steed,
to drink out of the water trough.
Elated that he could be off,
to seize the bridle Erec raced.
The boy released the steed in haste,
for he was terribly afraid.
So Erec mounted, and he made
Enide put foot in stirrup ring
and ordered her to make a spring.
Upon the charger's neck she landed,
as Erec told her and commanded.
Both, on one horse, began to ride.
They found the gate was open wide.
They left and were not stopped or curbed.
The castle was indeed disturbed
about the count, who had been killed.
No man, though valiant and strong-willed,
would follow to avenge his lord.
The count was slaughtered at his board.
And Erec's arms held his wife pressed
against his heart close to his chest.
He comforted, consoled, and kissed her,
and hugged and told her: "My sweet sister,
I've tested you in every way.
You must no longer feel dismay,
because by now I love you more
than I have ever done before.
I'm reassured of your affection,
convinced you love me to perfection.

From this time on I wish to be
the way that I was previously,
yours to command and at your will.
What words of yours I've taken ill
I fully pardon, word and deed."
Once more he kissed and hugged Enide.
Enide did not take it amiss
to have her lord embrace and kiss
and reassure her of his love.
They rode on swiftly, and above
they found it sweet and sheer delight
the moon shone brightly down that night.

GUIVRET RETURNS

THE news about them traveled fast;
news is the thing most swiftly passed.
It had already reached Guivret,
and he was told, to his regret,
a knight subdued by arms was found
slain dead within the forest's bound;
with him a lady of remark,
so fair, each eye glowed like a spark,
astonishing in her remorse.
The count Oringle of Limors
had found the two, had had the dead
borne off, and said he wished to wed
the lady, who instead opposed
the marriage that the count proposed.
When he had heard these tidings voiced,
there was no way Guivret rejoiced.
He thought of Erec from the start.
The idea crossed his mind and heart
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and have the corpse, if it were he,
interred with ceremonious rites.
He had a thousand men and knights
assembled who would seize the place.
Both corpse and lady, with good grace,
the count must yield, or his entire
strong castle would be put to fire.
By shining moonlight his men traced
the pathways to Limors, helms laced,
their coats of mail upon them flung,
around their necks their shields were slung,
and each one came well armed to fight.
When Erec saw them, near midnight,
he surely thought he would be quelled
and then be slaughtered or be held
without release, and had Enide
dismount and stand beside his steed.
No wonder if he felt on edge.
"My lady, keep behind this hedge
until these men pass; you must stay
a little bit beside this way.
I would not have them see us here,"
he said, "because it is unclear
what people they may be, what kind,
or what it is they wish to find.
Perhaps we're none of their concern;
if not, I see no place to turn
in any possible direction
that we could use to seek protection.
I don't know whether harm is near
but will not stay back out of fear.
Whoever strikes me will not lack
a match when I counterattack.
Yet I am worn out and in pain;
it is no wonder I complain.

I'll go directly out to meet
their company, while you retreat
behind this hedge and stand stock-still.
Take care you keep unseen until
they have gone far past where you stand."
Guivret came, lowered lance in hand,
for from afar they were revealed.
Because the moon was now concealed
and shadowed in a dark cloud's shade,
no recognitions could be made.
With Erec crushed and weak and pale,
and with Guivret now sound and hale,
past wounds and blows dealt in the duel,
now Erec will be quite a fool
to fail to make himself be known.
Then Erec let himself be shown
above the hedge, and Guivret spurred
toward Erec, saying not a word,
and Erec also did not speak.
He did not know he was so weak.
He bit off more than he could chew;
best he surrendered or withdrew.
The two began their jousting match,
and yet their powers did not match,
for one was strong and one unfit.
Guivret dealt Erec, when he hit,
a blow that knocked him with great force
over the croup of his war horse.
Enide, who was concealed, presumed
she was as good as dead or doomed,
with her lord lying on the ground.
Out of the hedge she made a bound
to help her lord, and if before
she had felt sorrow, she felt more.
She sought Guivret and seized his rein.

"Curse you, who struck a man in pain,
and wounded near to death, alone,
and helpless now and overthrown.
It was so wrong of you to try,
you could not give a reason why.
Had there been no one here but you,
alone, without your retinue,
so that you fought without their aid,
then your attack would have been stayed,
provided that my lord were well!
Now let your noble breeding tell,
be kind and generous, forsake
this combat that you undertake.
Your reputation will not gain,
if you have slaughtered or have slain
a knight who cannot even rise,
as you can clearly realize.
The wounds he took from blow on blow
now cover him from head to toe."
"Have no fear, lady, for I see
that you feel love and loyalty
for your lord and commend it all.
Have no misgivings, great or small,
toward me or those with whom I came.
Now you must tell me your lord's name
with no thought of concealing it.
It will be to your benefit,
whoever he is, if you confide.
You both are safe," Guivret replied.
"Then he will ride on safe and clear,
and neither you or he need fear."
So when Enide was reassured,
she said succinctly in a word:
"His name is Erec; I'll be frank
with one I see of noble rank."

Guivret got down, his joy complete,
and fell to earth at Erec's feet
where he was lying on the ground.
"I was in search of you and bound
straight for Limors, my lord," he said,
"because I thought to find you dead.
To tell you true I heard report
that Count Oringle did transport
a battle-slain knight to Limors
and wrongfully had tried to force
a lady with the knight borne dead
to be espoused to him and wed,
although she held him in distaste.
In such need I was making haste
to rescue her and lend her aid.
If he would not do as I prayed:
let you and lady be released,
then I should think myself the least
if I left him one foot of ground.
My love for you both is profound,
or otherwise I'd not attend.
I am Guivret; I am your friend.
But if I did you injury,
not knowing your identity,
you ought to pardon me for that."
Then Erec rose until he sat,
as far up as he could proceed.
"Friend, you're forgiven this misdeed,
because you did not recognize
who I was; we are quits, arise."
Then Erec started to recount
the way that he had killed the count
while he was seated at the table,
and how, outside before a stable,
he had regained his charger there,

how knights fled shrieking in the square
with all the armed men in the place:
"Flee! Flee! The corpse is giving chase!",
the nature of the trap that gaped,
and how he finally escaped
the stronghold on a downhill course a
and on the neck of his war horse b
he set his wife and bore her thence; c
he told him his experience. d

GUIVRET'S SISTERS

GUIVRET gave him to understand,
"I have a castle close at hand,
well sited and a favorite,
where, for your ease and benefit,
we'll go tomorrow, I suggest,
and have your injuries addressed.
I have two sisters with glad hearts,
well versed in all the healing arts,
who will obtain a swift, full cure.
Tonight we'll have our troops secure
their lodgings in these fields till day.
A little rest tonight will pay
and do enormous good to you.
Here we must lodge, sir, in my view."
Said Erec: "Yes, I have no doubt."
So they remained there camping out.
Yet there was little where they camped;
supplies were sparse, the campsite cramped.
Among the hedgerows was no lack
of people forced to bivouack.
Guivret had his tent pitched on site
and ordered a wick lit, since light

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and ordered a wick lit, since light

and clarity were what he sought.
From coffers he had candles brought
and had them lit within the tent.
Enide did not feel discontent;
it all had turned out for the best.
She got her lord disarmed, undressed,
and washed his wounds, to which, when dried,
the bandage she herself applied.
No other's touch was to her pleasure,
and, having taken her full measure,
no cause had Erec to demur,
because he felt great love for her.
Guivret, most cordial, had a high
long bed made from a good supply
of grass and rushes and his sets
of quilted spreads and coverlets.
They covered Erec, there at rest.
Guivret went to an opened chest
and took three pasties out of it.
He said: "Now taste a little bit
of these cold pasties, friend of mine,
and drink some water mixed with wine.
I've seven tuns full, of repute,
which, being hurt, you must dilute.
And now my friend, so dear and sweet,
the time has come to try to eat;
think how much better you will feel.
My lady too shall have a meal,
your wife, who suffered great dismay
on your account for much this day,
but you have settled every score.
You have escaped; eat of my store.
Dear friend, with my meal I'll proceed."
He sat by Erec and Enide,
whose full approval had been won

by everything Guivret had done.
They both told Erec he must dine
and gave him only watered wine,
the wine was too strong taken straight.
An invalid's meal Erec ate,
with scant drink, for he did not dare,
but he reposed in comfort there.
In peace he slept the night away,
and none caused noise or disarray.
They wakened early, when day broke.
All got appareled, when they woke,
and mounted to ride on their course.
But Erec dearly loved his horse;
all other mounts he'd overrule.
Enide was furnished with a mule,
because her palfrey had been lost.
She did not count it of great cost
and did not pay it any heed.
On muleback gently rode Enide.
The mule was handsome and well paced,
and she was feeling greatly braced
that Erec, undismayed, could tell
he would recover and mend well.
The group of riders went along
to Pointurie, a castle strong,
well situated, fair and fierce,
arriving at midmorn by tierce.
Within that castle, strongly set,
there dwelt two sisters of Guivret.
Guivret sought in that residence
a chamber, far from turbulence,
but quiet, pleasant, full of air,
where he led Erec. Next, the pair
of sisters, to whom he appealed,
endeavored to see Erec healed,

and Erec was so reassured
that he felt sure he would be cured.
They first extracted all dead flesh,
then salved and bandaged him afresh.
The sisters strove to see him mend
and used their skillfulness to tend
and wash his wounds and salve them more.
At daily meals, no less than four,
both food and liquids they compelled,
with garlic, pepper both withheld.
Whoever came and left his room,
beside him always was one whom
he loved the most of all: Enide.
Guivret came often to proceed
to ask and find out what to bring
if he should lack for anything.
So Erec was well served and kept,
and what he needed to accept
he was not given with bad grace
but with a joyful, willing face.
The maidens worked with might and main
at Erec's cure; he felt no pain
or misery within two weeks.
To bring some color to his cheeks
they started baths to make him glow.
The proper treatment to bestow
they knew, with nothing left to learn.
When Erec could go and return,
Guivret had garments made, a pair,
one ermine-lined, the other vair,
of silk but of two different types.
One was from Scotland, silk with stripes,
a fabric that a cousin meant
to be a gift for him and sent;
one oriental silk, dark blue.

Enide's was ermine, dark of hue,
of oriental silk, most rare;
striped silk was Erec's, lined with vair
and of no lesser price at sale.
Now Erec was all sound and hale;
now he was wholly cured and eased,
and now Enide was very pleased. 5198
Now she had joy and sheer delight. a
They lay together through the night. b
Her every wish had its reward. c
Now her great beauty was restored. d
Her sorrows left her so affected e
she had grown pallid and dejected. f
Now she was kissed and now embraced, g
her wishes granted to her taste. h
Now she had joy and sheer delight. 5199
They lay within one bed clasped tight, 5200
and they began to hug and kiss,
and nothing else could cause such bliss.
Their suffering had been so grim,
his pain for her and hers for him,
and now their penance was all done.
Each one tried not to be outdone
at how to please the other best.
I must be still about the rest.
They have forgotten sorrows past
and reaffirmed their love so vast, 5210
and blotted out most of their woe.
Then it was time for them to go,
and therefore Erec and Enide
sought out Guivret, a friend indeed
who, every way that he could tell,
had served and honored them so well.
Thus Erec, taking leave, made known:
"No longer, sir, can I postpone

my need to travel to my land.
Take preparations well in hand,
ensure I have all that I need,
because by morning I'll proceed
as soon as it is break of day.
I've had sufficient time to stay
with you to feel restored and strong.
Please Heaven I may live so long
that I may find you at some site
where I possess the power and might
to serve and do you honor there.
I shall not linger anywhere
unless made prisoner of some sort,
until I reach King Arthur's court,
whom I would see where he may dwell,
at Robais or at Carduel."
Guivret spoke swiftly in this tone:
"Sir, you shall not depart alone.
I shall go with you on this ride,
and with companions at our side,
if you approve." So he concurred
with traveling as Guivret preferred;
thus Erec would take to the road.
That night the party packed and stowed,
because their group no longer cared
to stay encamped, so they prepared
to travel when the morning broke.
They saddled mounts when they awoke,
and Erec, at first light, went by
the maidens' room to say good-bye
before he left. Enide came after,
and she was filled with joy and laughter
that they were ready for the road.
They paid the deep respects they owed
when taking leave of that kind pair,

and gracious Erec did declare
his gratitude, at his farewell.
They'd saved his life and made him well;
he vowed to be theirs to command.
He took the nearer sister's hand;
the other by Enide was grasped.
Then all together, with hands clasped,
went from the chamber, and the four
ascended to the palace door
and went into it, hand in hand.
Guivret proceeded to command
his group to mount immediately.
Enide had never thought to see
the time they'd mount to leave the place.
A palfrey with an easy pace,
good-tempered, fair, of noble stock,
was brought out to the mounting block.
The palfrey was a good fair horse,
compared with that left in Limors
of equal worth in every way,
a sorrel, not a dapple-gray.
The head was not at all like it;
the way the horsehair had been split,
one cheek was wholly white as snow,
the other cheek as black as crow,
between the two parts was a line
a greener shade than leaf of vine*
that separated white from black.
I'll tell you truth about the tack:
straps, breast cloth, saddle were refined
in workmanship and well designed.
The whole breast cloth and straps were full
of emeralds and beautiful.
The saddle cover was a swath
of rich and costly purple cloth.

The saddlebows were ivory,
carved with a tale from history
of how Aeneas came from Troy,*
and how in Carthage, with great joy,
fair Dido gave him a reception,
about Aeneas's deception:
she took her own life for his wrong,
and how Aeneas his life long
ruled as king, by his victory,
Laurentum and all Lombardy.
The work was subtle to behold,
well carved and trimmed all with fine gold.
The carver of the saddlebows
spent seven years; that Breton chose
no other work while they were wrought.
I do not know their price when bought,
but he deserved great recompense.
Indemnity of excellence
for her lost palfrey had Enide
when she was honored with this steed,
appareled richly with this tack.
Enide climbed gaily on the back
of this fine horse she was supplied,
and lords and squires prepared to ride
and mounted and rode on ahead
with falcons, sparrow hawks, and red
and tawny goshawks in a throng,
and pointers, greyhounds brought along.
Guivret had fetched them from his court
for their amusement and their sport.

THEY rode the most direct, straight way
from morning till the close of day,
some thirty Welsh leagues, even more,
until the party was before
a splendid castle's parapet,
encircled by wall newly set,
and water ran around this keep
on every side, swift, very deep,
and stormy as it rushed and roared.
Since Erec wondered who was lord,
when he beheld this citadel,
he stopped to find out who could tell
by whom the castle was possessed.
"Friend, can you answer my request?"
he asked his good companion.
"What is its name? Who is the one
who owns this castle? Do recount
if it is owned by king or count.
You brought me here from where I came,
so tell me if you know the name."
"Sir," he responded, "truth to tell,
I know the answer very well.
The castle's name is Brandigant.
It is so strong and elegant,
it fears no king or emperor.
Were France and all the realm at war,
and everyone from here to Liege
were thronged around it laying siege,
they would not take the castle while
their lifetimes ran, because its isle
extends over fifteen leagues of grounds.
It grows whatever in its bounds
a wealthy castle needs to eat,

for it yields fruit and wine and wheat,
and woods and river lie inside.
They fear no strike from any side,
and nobody can starve them out.
Now, King Evrain built this redoubt,
held it in peace his lifetime long,
enclosed the castle, made it strong,
and he will hold it all his life.
It was not fear of foe or strife
that made him fortify the place;
it lends the castle greater grace.
Had it no wall, no tower of stone
but water flowing round alone,
so strong and safe would be its plan
that it would not fear any man."
Said Erec: "Lord, what opulence!
Let's see the fortress and defense
and lodge within the castle site,
for that is where I would alight."
"Sir," said Guivret, his worry deep,
"don't be annoyed, but at this keep
we ought not to dismount and stay;
it has a dreadful passageway."
Asked Erec: "Dreadful? Do you know?
Whatever it may be, tell us so;
to learn of it would make me glad."
"I am afraid, sir, something bad
may happen to you thereabout.
Your heart is very kind and stout,
and so I know that if I venture
to talk with you of the adventure
and what I know in its regard,
for it is dangerous and hard,
you'll want to go there and explore.
For over seven years and more,

I have heard tell and I have learned
no one who entered has returned
who sought adventure in that hold.
From many lands, knights proud and bold
have come there with such interest.
Sir, do not think it is a jest.
You'll learn no more of this affair
until you pledge your word and swear
by love that you have promised me
that you will never go to see.
From this adventure none retreat;
all meet with death and with defeat."
Then Erec, pleased by what he knew,
implored Guivret to feel no rue
and told him: "Ah, my dear sweet friend,
let us take lodging there and wend
our way inside; do not be vexed.
Tonight we should take lodging next.
I would not have you feel dismay.
If any honor comes my way,
I think you ought to find it well.
Of the adventure that you tell,
to name it is my sole request,
and you'll be quits for all the rest."
He said: "Sir, I cannot be still
and only tell you what you will.
The name is pleasing to the ear,
but its achievement is severe;
no one escapes alive from there.
Now this adventure's name, I swear:
'Joy of the Court' is how it's known."*
"Good Lord! In joy is good alone,"
said Erec, "and that is my end.
Don't keep discouraging me, friend,
from that or other things as well.

We're lodging at the citadel;
from it great good may be conferred.
For I shall never be deterred
from going there to seek the Joy."
"God hear the words that you employ,
so may you find your joy therein
and then return without chagrin.
I clearly see you must proceed.
Let's go; our lodging is agreed,
since it can be no other ways.
No knight deserving of high praise,
I've heard related and been told,
can enter into that stronghold
in search of lodging and refrain
from being housed by King Evrain.
The king, that noble, gracious man,
has already proclaimed a ban:
that if his burghers wish to live,
no lodging places may they give
within their homes to any lord
from outside seeking bed and board,
so he himself can honor all
the lords who stay within his wall."
They sought the castle's acreage
and passed beyond the lists and bridge.
When once the castle's lists were passed,
the castle folk, who had amassed
in troops along the street, aswarm,
saw Erec of such handsome form,
they were persuaded there and then
the others served him as his men.
The whole town stared at him, nonplussed,
and he was thoroughly discussed
in murmurs as he rode along,
and maids who danced in rings in song

left off their caroling and slowed.
All looked at Erec as he rode.
They saw his handsomeness was great
and crossed themselves and mourned his fate.*
"Ah, Lord! Alas!" each said with rue,
"this passing knight is coming to
the Joy of the Court; once it is met,
he won't return without regret.
For always, anyone who came
from other lands met harm and shame
who had the Joy of the Court in mind;
in pledge he left his head behind."
And afterward, so he would hear,
they said loud: "Knight, God keep you clear
of misadventure and duress,
for you are handsome to excess.
Your handsomeness is cause for sorrow,
for we shall see it quenched tomorrow.
Tomorrow will your death arrive;
there is no chance you will survive
without God as defense and guard."
While Erec heard with due regard
these comments through the township's bourn,
some seven thousand came to mourn,
yet nothing made him feel dismay.
He went ahead without delay.
Impartially and with good grace
he greeted all within the place,
and he was hailed by all he met.
Now, many anguished till they sweat,
for, more than he, they went in dread
that Erec would be hurt or dead.
When people saw that he was fair
of countenance, with noble air,
then everybody's heart was won.

All feared that he would be undone;
knights, ladies, maidens, all concurred.
Then King Evrain was given word
of people coming to his court
with a large escort, by report,
and their equipment, arguing
their lord might be a count or king.
Within the middle of the street
he greeted those he came to meet.
"You are all welcome here," he spoke,
"this escort, lord, and gentlefolk.
Be welcome and dismount to earth!"
As they got down, there was no dearth
of folk to take their horses' rein,
and with correctness King Evrain
saw the arrival of Enide,
ran up to help her from her steed,
and greeted her when once they met.
As is required by etiquette,
he took Enide's hand, soft and fair,
and led her up his palace stair,
and honored her as best he could.
His manners were extremely good;
no mockery or ill intent.
He had a room prepared with scent,
with incense, aloes, and with myrrh.
On entering, without demur,
all praised its charm and its perfume
and, hand in hand, went in the room
the way the king brought them, who voiced
his pleasure at them and rejoiced.
But why should I describe the ilk
of broidery of drapes of silk
with which the room was made sublime?
It is a foolish waste of time,

and time I do not wish to waste.
I wish to make a little haste,
for he who takes the way that's straight
bypasses those who deviate;
I do not feel like stopping there.
The king gave orders to prepare
the supper, at the proper hour.
I won't delay if I've the power
to find a straighter way or jaunt.
Whatever heart and mouth could want
was plentiful to everyone.
That evening fruit, fowl, venison,
and several kinds of wine were passed,
yet all these things good cheer surpassed.
Of all repasts the most delicious
is good cheer mingled with good wishes.
They all were served with great abandon,
till Erec saw fit to abandon
the food before him and his drink
and suddenly began to think
of Joy, which he had most at heart.
The Joy made him decide to start
a conversation King Evrain
was just as willing to maintain.
"It is high time I was inclined
to mention what is on my mind
and what it is I came to seek.
It's more than time for me to speak.
My hidden thoughts I shall report:
I now request the Joy of the Court;
there's nothing that I so desire.
If it is yours to give me, sire,
give it, whatever it may be."
"Dear friend," the king said, "certainly
your talk is idle chattering.

It is a very dreadful thing;
to many good men it proved dread.
When all is done, you will be dead,
for you will pay a dreadful price
if you will not take my advice.
I would advise you to refrain
from asking for such cause for pain,
and which, if you believe me true,
you could not hope to carry through.
Now say no more of it, stand mute,
for you would be far from astute
to disregard what I've advised.
Though I am not the least surprised
you would be honored and acclaimed,
were I to see your body maimed
or see you as a captive, caught,
my heart would truly be distraught.
You may be sure that I have seen
men who were worthy and were keen
to seek this Joy and did implore it,
and never were the better for it,
for they have perished one and all.
Before tomorrow evenfall
that is the fate you will enjoy
if you would undertake the Joy.
You may, but to your detriment;
you would do better to repent
of what you ask, if you desire
your own well-being, and retire.
I've warned what happens if you fail,
less than the truth would be betrayal."
Though Erec paid the king's words heed,
and he was willing to concede
their soundness, the more marvelous
the wonder and more arduous

the venture, the more definite
he was to seek and strive for it.
"Sire, let me tell you, as I can,
you seem a noble, loyal man.
Whatever fate befalls me there,
I won't blame you for the affair
in which I wish to be involved.
And now the matter is resolved.
Whatever I have undertaken,
I never will become so shaken
I fail to do all in my might
before I flee the battle-site."
"I knew that you were not so weak,
and you shall have the Joy you seek
despite objections on my part,"
the king said, "but I'm sad at heart
and apprehensive of your doom.
But you are pledged now to assume
this challenge and be so employed.
If you are feeling overjoyed
by how it ends, you will have won
an honor that's surpassed by none.
As I desire, may God intend
to grant to you a joyful end."
All evening, till they went to bed,
they talked about what lay ahead.
Their beds were made by castle folk.
Next day, when early morning broke,
and Erec's wakening was done,
he saw the brilliant dawn and sun
and got up early and prepared.
Enide was angry and despaired
and was becoming most perturbed,
for she had spend the night disturbed
by fear and by her premonitions

about her lord and his ambitions
to place himself in jeopardy.
But he prepared immediately
and would not stop for anybody.
So Erec could equip his body,
the king sent arms he'd well employ
when he arose to seek the Joy.
This weaponry was not refused,
for Erec's own was damaged, used,
in poor condition, and well worn.
Within the hall he armed that morn
with armor he was glad to wear.
He went the whole way down the stair,
and when he walked the stairsteps' course,
below he found his saddled horse
and King Evrain, who was astride.
They all prepared to mount and ride;
both court and guests it entertained.
Throughout the castle, none remained,
a well formed or twisted of physique,
b male, female, tall, short, strong, or weak;
if fit enough and of the notion,
they followed, causing great commotion.
They made loud noise in every street,
for lesser folk and the elite
all cried "Alas!" with all their might.
"Alas! Joy has betrayed you, knight,
the Joy that you expect to win;
you seek your death and your chagrin."
Not one of them failed to complain:
"God curse this Joy, for it has slain
so many men in arms well versed.
Today this Joy will do the worst
undoubtedly it's ever done."
Now, Erec heard what everyone

was saying clearly in lament,
for all said: "Noble, competent,
and handsome knight, oh, woe is you.
By rights it never should ensue
that your life is about to end,
or some misfortune should descend
and leave you badly hurt or maimed."
Though Erec heard what they proclaimed,
he passed them by for all they said,
and Erec did not bow his head
or show a trace of cowardice.
Whatever might be said amiss,
he wished to see and know and learn
what caused such pain and deep concern
and anguish to each lord and vassal.
The king led him beyond the castle
inside a nearby orchard's groves.
The people prayed therein in droves
that for the efforts he'd employ
the Lord would let him leave with joy.
My words should not be further flung
lest I be worn and dry of tongue
when I describe this grove to you
the way the story says is true.
No fences and no walls surrounded
the orchard, which by air was bounded;*
by necromancy, everywhere
the garden was enclosed by air.
No one could enter in the space
unless they entered at one place,
as if the grove were ironclad.
Ripe fruit and flowers could be had
all summer and all winter through.
The fruit consented, where it grew,
to be consumed, but not outside,

and hindered anyone who tried
to carry out some of the fruit;
for he could not retrace his route
to leave the orchard's boundary
till he replaced them on the tree.
And every kind of bird that wings
beneath the sky, which, when it sings,
brings man enjoyment and delight,
was found in numbers in that site.
On earth, as long as it survives,
whatever spice or herb plant thrives
and is of use in medicine
could be found planted there within
and flourishing in greatest plenty.
The people, through a narrow entry,
went in the orchard in a throng.
The king was first to go along,
and, after, all the others pressed.
Then Erec rode, his lance at rest,
inside the orchard, where he heard
the songs sung by its types of bird,
a music that he did enjoy
because to him they meant the Joy,
the thing to which he most aspired.
A horror that would have inspired
fear in the fiercest man we have,
the warrior Thibaut the Slav,*
or any one of all we knew,
or Ospinal or Fernagu,
stunned Erec as it met his eye.
Before them, shining helmets, high
upon sharp stakes, comprised the wonder,
each circlet had a head thereunder.
He saw the stakes were laden so,
except the first stake in the row,

whereon as yet no thing was borne,
or nothing other than a horn.
Though puzzled by what he observed,
yet Erec did not feel unnerved.
He asked the king about the sight,
who rode beside him on the right.
The king explained what it might be:
"My friend, this thing here that you see,
can you begin to realize
its meaning and what it implies?
Were you to hold your body dear,
you'd be concerned, because out here
this single stake, with horn suspended,
awaits a knight who's long attended.
We do not know whom it awaits:
were you whom it anticipates
or else another in your stead.
Take care it does not bear your head;
the stake is suited for that use.
My warnings to you were profuse
before you came, and have no doubt,
you'll never make your way back out
unless, beheaded, out you go.
The stake awaits your head, you know.
If it's affixed upon the end,
the way the matter does portend,
once that your head is placed and fast,
another stake beside the last
will be positioned and, erect,
await whomever we expect.
About the horn, I'll only warn
that nobody can blow the horn,
but to the man who makes it sound
esteem and honor will redound
above all of my countrymen.

He will acquire such honor then
that all will come to him, impressed,
to honor him and deem him best.
Now that is all of this affair,
so make your people move back there.
The Joy is coming; I believe
that it will give you cause to grieve."
Thus King Evrain left him behind,
and Erec toward Enide inclined,
still at his side, her grief profound,
and yet not uttering a sound.
What worth is grief the lips impart
unless such grief has touched the heart.
His knowledge of her heart complete,
he told her: "Sister, fair and sweet,
and noble lady, wise and true,
I know your whole heart through and through,
and I can see you feel great fear,
but why you should remains unclear.
You have no reason for alarm
until my body suffers harm;
for, once you see my shield a shard,
and see my body cut and marred,
and see my shining hauberk's mesh
blood-covered from my broken flesh,
and see my helmet crushed and smashed,
and see me tired to death, abashed,
incapable of self-protection,
awaiting mercy in subjection,
imploring it reluctantly,
then you can raise lament for me.
Lamenting now is premature.
Sweet lady, you cannot be sure
what will occur, nor do I know.
You have no reason for your woe.

Had I no boldness of my own
for inspiration but alone
the courage that your love makes thrive,
I'd not fear any man alive
in single combat, hand to hand.
But boasting of such self-command
is foolish, which I only do
in an attempt to comfort you.
Be comforted and let it be.
You'll go no further on with me.
I can't delay; you can't proceed.
The king so ordered and decreed."
Then Erec kissed her on the face,
commending her to Heaven's grace,
and she commended him in turn,
but she was filled with deep concern
she could not follow and escort
her lord until she knew what sort
of an adventure would ensue
and how her lord would carry through.
She had to wait, her grief acute,
and could not follow on his route.
He took a pathway on his own,
without companionship, alone,
until he found a silver bed
with an embroidered golden spread,
placed where a sycamore cast shade.
Upon the bed there was a maid
of noble body, fair of face,
with every beauty, every grace,
who sat in total solitude.
Her ornaments and pulchritude
I don't wish to particularize,
though someone who might scrutinize
the maid could say that it was true

Lavinia of Laurentum, who*
was noble and supremely fair,
did not possess a quarter share
of beauty that the maid displayed.
To look more closely at the maid,
next Erec neared her bed and tried
to take a seat close by her side.
Immediately an armed knight wove
amid the trees and through the grove,
armed with red armor for a brawl,
and he was toweringly tall.
Had he not been so huge in scale,
there'd have been no more handsome male
beneath the heavens than this knight,
but he was one foot more in height,
all say, than any knights they'd known.
"Sir! Sir!" this knight so overgrown
cried out before he came in view.
"So help me, what a fool are you,
near to my maid," went his reproach,
"whom you're unworthy to approach.
My head, you could not even wonder
what it will cost you for your blunder.
Stand back!" the outsized knight declared.
Then Erec stopped and coldly stared.
The knight stood still at Erec's glance,
and neither started to advance
till Erec had his chance to say
all that he wanted to convey.
"In speech, my friend, one can dispense
stupidity as well as sense,
so you may threaten as you will.
I am the one who will keep still,
because there is no sense in threats.
You know what arrogance begets?

Someone may think he's won the game
and then may lose it all the same.
So foolish threats are out of place.
When one man flees, a horde gives chase.
I do not hold you in such fear
that I shall flee; I'm waiting here
to make a suitable defense.
If someone threatens violence,
I shall not flee till in such shape
I cannot otherwise escape."
"God save me, no," replied the knight.
"You won't go lacking for a fight.
Here is my challenge and defiance."
Now you may have complete reliance
the horses' reins were not held taut;
the lances with which both knights fought
were not small ones, but thick and stout
planed wooden shafts, and well dried out,
more rigid and more strong to grip.
They struck, with pointed iron tip,
upon their shields with so much strength
each penetrated six feet's length
through shining shield while thrusting in,
but neither split the other's skin
or broke or snapped his lance in two.
Each knight immediately withdrew
his lance so they could reconnect,
resume a joust that was correct,
and square off for another run.
Each jousted with the other one,
and each knight struck so fierce a stroke
against the other, lances broke,
beneath the knights the horses sprawled.
Still in the saddle, those who brawled
did not feel injured in the least.

Each sprang up by his fallen beast,
so brave and agile did he feel.
With good swords of Vienne-made steel*
against the other each knight strove
on foot within the orchard grove
and rained blows in so many places
upon the shields' bright shining faces
their shields were turned to shattered marks.
Their eyes were glittering like sparks.
Knights could not strive more or do other
to harm and injure one another
than those two did as they travailed.
The two ferociously assailed
each other with their swords and laid
blows with the flat and edge of blade
on teeth and cheeks, nosepieces, arms,
and fists, and more blows from their arms
did ribs and napes and temples take
so all their bones began to ache.
Though they were very weak and sore,
they did not slacken but strove more
and battled even harder yet.
Their eyes were stinging from their sweat
and from the blood that dripped with it,
so they could scarcely see a bit.
Their sword blows often went to waste,
for as to where swords should be placed
they were like those who cannot see
and scarcely could do injury.
You must not have the slightest doubt
they were employing, in this bout,
their utmost force as they assailed.
Because by now their eyesight failed,
and they had wholly lost their vision,
they let shields fall in their collision.

Each knight attacked his foe, enraged;
they pulled and tore, so close engaged
upon their knees they both collapsed.
They wrestled while much time elapsed;
The taller knight grew tired to death
and was completely out of breath.
The none hour passed that afternoon.
Where Erec thought most opportune
he drove the knight around the place;
he pulled and tore so every lace
on his helm snapped in every section
and made him bow in his direction.
The tall knight fell upon his chest.
However much he was distressed,
he could not get upon his feet
and only could concede defeat.
The knight said: "Undeniably,
I must admit you conquered me
but very much against my will.
Yet your renown and rank may still
turn my defeat to my acclaim.
If I could know your proper name,
please tell it to me," he cajoled,
"tell it so I may be consoled.
I'll gladly have defeat conferred
by someone better, on my word,
but if my fate is so adverse
that I have lost to someone worse,
I'd think it greatly to my shame."
"My friend, you wish to know my name,"
said Erec. "I intend to say
my name before I go away,
but on such terms as I allow,
which are that you must tell me now
why in this garden you abide.

I want it wholly clarified.
Tell me the Joy, besides your name,
the Joy I am so keen to claim."
"I'll speak truth without reticence
whenever you'd have me commence."
So Erec's name was not kept back.
"Have you heard tell about King Lac
and his son Erec?" "I can tell,
sir, truly, that I knew him well,
for at King Lac's court I long stayed
before I won the accolade,
and if his wishes had been met
on no pretext would I as yet
have ever left his company."
"How very well you must know me,
since you were with me, you report,
once at the king my father's court."
"Faith, what good fortune I've attained!
Now hear why I have been detained
so long within this orchard's stand.
I'll tell you just as you command,
whatever may be my despair.
This maiden who is sitting there
loved me from childhood, and I her.
It pleased us both, we did concur,
and our love grew increasingly
and deepened till she asked of me
a favor that she would not name.
Who could deny a sweetheart's claim?
He is no lover who'd refuse
his sweetheart anything she'd choose.
Wholeheartedly, without a lie,
if possible, he should comply,
so any favor I'd allow.
She asked me next to take a vow.

Had she sought more, I'd have concurred.
The maiden took me at my word,
when I had vowed her my consent.
I did not know what my vow meant
until I had become a knight.
That day, in many nobles' sight,
within that very orchard glade,
when I received the accolade
from King Evrain my uncle's hand,
my maid gave me to understand
I'd vowed I'd never leave this space
until a knight came to this place
by whom, in combat, I was trounced.
Since that was what my maid announced,
I did not leave this orchard's bourn
quite properly, as I had sworn.
I never should have vowed I would.
But since I knew and saw the good
within the one I held most dear,
I could not let myself appear
the least displeased when I had heard
how she would take me at my word.
Had she perceived in any part,
she'd promptly have withdrawn her heart,
and that I never would have sought.
My maiden, in this manner, thought
to keep me here a lengthy stay.
She did not think to see the day
a knight would ever come within
this orchard, fight with me, and win.
So she felt free, by her decision,
to keep me here with her in prison
for all the days I had to live.
If I were uncompetitive,
I would be wrong to use deceit

and not endeavor to defeat
all those whom I could overthrow.
Release by slackness would be low.
I wish to make it very clear
I have no friend, however dear,
against whom I would have held back.
With weapons I was never slack;
in combat I was not a coward.
The helms of those I overpowered
and slew were clearly in your sight,
however, if you view it right,
their deaths should not be thought my fault,
for I could not avoid assault
unless I wished to be a faker
and a perfidious oath-breaker.
I've told you truly what I've done;
be sure the honor you have won
is not one of the smaller sort,
for you bring great joy to the court
my own friends and my uncle grace.
Now I'm released to leave this place.
All will rejoice who come to court.
It has been called the Joy of the Court
by those who waited for the joy,
and what a time did they employ
in waiting for it to be rendered
by him to whom I first surrendered,
by you, the fighter who prevailed.
You have enchanted and assailed
my knighthood and renown and fame,
so I may rightly tell my name,
which you would like to ascertain:
for I am called Mabonagrain.
That name is not linked to my face
where I've been seen in any place

except this land and this alone.
I've never uttered or made known
my own name since I was a youth.
So now, my lord, you know the truth
of what you wanted me to state,
and yet I shall reiterate.
Within this orchard, in its bourn,
among these trees there is a horn,
and you have seen it, I believe.
Now, I am not allowed to leave
until the horn is blown and sounded;
then I shall cease to be impounded.
The Joy thereafter will commence.
There will be no impediments,
for anyone who harks or hears
this horn resounding in his ears,
to coming to the court with speed.
Get up, sir, and at once proceed
to take the horn up straightaway.
You have no reason to delay;
proceed to do what you must do."
So Erec rose without ado.
The knight rose with him and attended;
they sought the horn that hung suspended,
which Erec seized and blew a blast
with all the might he had amassed.
Afar they heard the trumpet sounds.
Enide's rejoicing knew no bounds
once she could hear the trumpet's voice.
It caused Guivret's heart to rejoice.
The king and people felt great cheer
and everyone was glad to hear
of this event and very pleased.
The people took no rest nor ceased
to celebrate their joy in song.

Let Erec boast, and not be wrong,
there never was such joy, that day,
one human mouth could never say.
Though indescribable, the sum
I'll tell you without tedium
or long descriptions, but in short.
Throughout the land there flew report
of what transpired in this event.
Then all, without impediment,
could come to court without objections,
where people ran from all directions,
some on foot, others swift on steed,
not letting other folk precede.
Within the orchard grove, a throng
disarming Erec sang a song
about the Joy in competition.
The ladies made a composition
they called the Lay of Joy, a lay
obscure and little known today.
Of such joy Erec had his fill,
well served according to his will.
This joyfulness that had begun
was scarcely pleasing to the one
who sat upon the silver bed.
The Joy that she observed instead
left her in great discomfiture,
but many people must endure
and look on things they find vexatious.
Enide's behavior was most gracious.
So pensive had the maiden grown
who sat upon the bed alone,
Enide decided she would go
to seek her out and let her know
her own concerns and how she fared
and ask if possibly she cared

to talk about her own position,
if she were of such disposition.
Enide first meant to go alone
and seek the maiden on her own,
but of the maids and ladies there
part of the noblest and most fair
accompanied her out of affection
to someone plunged in deep dejection,
to comfort someone whom the Joy
had managed deeply to annoy.
The maid had come now to believe
her friend who was about to leave
the orchard would not now abide
as long and often at her side.
No matter whom it might estrange,
he would depart; it would not change.
The term was up; the time had come,
and so the tears were streaming from
her eyes and down along her face.
More than I can attempt to trace
she felt her anger and her woes.
The maiden nonetheless arose,
but of no interest to her were
the ones who came to comfort her;
she kept lamenting and entreating.
Enide gave her a gracious greeting,
but while a lengthy time went by,
she could not, by one word, reply.
Her sighs and sobs had left the maid
distressed and speechless and dismayed.
The maid replied, when time had passed,
returned her greeting at long last,
and when she gazed upon Enide
a lengthy time and paid her heed,
it seemed that she had seen her face

and known her in another place.
The maiden did not hesitate
but started to investigate
what land Enide came from on earth
and where was her lord's place of birth.
When asked to answer these two questions,
Enide confirmed the maid's impressions
at once and with a true account.
"I am the niece of that same count
who holds Lalut in his domain.
I'm his full sister's child, again,
born in Lalut and therein reared."
The maid was so immensely cheered
she burst out laughing undeterred.
The very moment that she heard,
from her all thoughts of sorrow crept.
Her heart in deep elation leapt,
and her great joy went unconcealed.
She kissed and hugged her and revealed:
"You, cousin, are my father's niece;
this news is true in every piece,
your father and my own are brothers.
I think you have not heard from others,
and so you do not understand
the way I came into this land.
The count your uncle was at war,
and in his service was a corps
of knights from many lands he'd hired.
Thus, lovely cousin, it transpired
a mercenary chanced to bring
along the nephew of the king
of Brandigant, who for one year
was in my father's house, or near.
Since that time twelve full years I've whiled.
Then I was just a little child,

and he was handsome and engaging.
We made commitments there, engaging
ourselves as we might both agree.
Our wishes were in harmony.
He started loving me and swore
and pledged to me forevermore
that he would be my lover dear,
and also he would bring me here,
and he and I were pleased thereby.
He was impatient, as was I,
to come with him into that grove.
When we both entered there, we strove
to let none know about us two.
That day, between just me and you,
we both were young and immature.
I've told the truth, you may be sure;
and now in turn you must uncover
by what adventure your own lover
has made you his own, truthfully."
"Dear cousin, he has married me,
so that my father was aware,
my mother's joy beyond compare.
Appropriately, all our kin
knew of it and rejoiced therein;
the count himself expressed delight,
for Erec is a splendid knight;
no one could ever find one better.
There is no way that he could better
his reputation or progress
in kindness and in knightliness.
I don't believe his peers in worth
and valiancy have come to birth.
His love is deep, mine more intense
and could and should be no pretense.
No greater love could he have won,

because my lord is a king's son,
and yet he took me poor and nude.
Thus through my lord I have accrued
prestige and honors that are such
as never came to a poor wretch.
So I shall tell, if you desire,
a tale of which I never tire
of how I came to such high rank,
and I shall be completely frank."
Then she explained to her the way
that Erec reached Lalut that day,
which she did not wish kept concealed,
so her adventure was revealed,
and word for word, without omissions.
I shall refrain from repetitions.
It is a tedious device
to stretch a tale by telling twice.
While they were talking on their own,
a lady strolled away alone
to tell the barons they had met
to make their own joy greater yet,
and all together they rejoiced
about this joy they had heard voiced.
Mabonagrain learned and expressed
far greater joy than all the rest.
His sweetheart had become consoled.
The lady who had brought and told
the news to him so hastily
made him elated suddenly.
The king, who had rejoiced before,
was now rejoicing even more,
so even he was in accord.
Enide appeared before her lord
and brought her cousin up with her,
a maiden who was lovelier

than Helen, with a nobler grace
and more appealing form and face.
Then Erec and Mabonagrain
ran to meet them, while King Evrain,
Guivret, and all the rest ran there
to honor and to greet the pair.
Nobody lingered or withdrew.
Mabonagrain rejoiced to view
Enide, as she did, when they met.
Together, Erec and Guivret
rejoiced when they both met the maid.
The men and women there displayed
great joy by kisses and embrace.
They said that they should leave the place;
they'd stayed within the grove too long.
All were prepared to go along
back to the castle; they converged
to kiss and joyously emerged.
They all went out behind the king.
The barons were assembling
from all the countryside around
before they reached the castle's bound,
and all who learned the great Joy's fame
and could come to the castle came.
There was a multitude amassed
to look at Erec as he passed;
high, low, poor, rich, each person pressed
to get ahead of all the rest.
The people greeted Erec, bowed,
and kept repeating in the crowd:
"God save him who restored anew
the joy and bliss our court once knew!
God save him, the most fortunate
of men that God strove to create!"
They led him to the court and voiced

the way they heartily rejoiced,
as their hearts counseled and expounded.
At court the harps and vielles resounded,
symphonias, fiddles, psalteries,
and all stringed music harmonies
there are to name or to report,
but I shall sum them up in short,
not make an overlengthy story.
The king did all for Erec's glory,
and with good will that was unfeigned
all came to see him entertained.
His service was their great desire.
The Joy went on three days entire,
and Erec could not turn away.
The fourth day Erec would not stay
for all the pleas they might employ.
So they escorted him with joy;
a large crowd came to say good-bye.
Had Erec wanted to reply
to greetings offered, one by one,
one-half a day would not have done.
He hailed and hugged the barons each,
and hailed all others in one speech
on Heaven commending their reliance.
Nor did Enide remain in silence;
she hailed the barons each by name,
accepting their combined acclaim
upon leave-taking and departing.
With tenderness, as they were starting,
she hugged her cousin, whom she kissed.
They left; now let the Joy desist.
So some returned; some went their way.
Guivret and Erec did not stay
but joyfully kept to their road
while heading for the king's abode;

they knew which castle and they sped.
The previous day he had been bled.
Of the king's household, privily
in his rooms were a meagerly
five hundred barons grouped around.
Thus, never had the king been found
so much alone in any season,
and he felt troubled for the reason
there were few people at his court.
A messenger ran to report
well in advance, whom they had sent
to tell the king how imminent
was their arrival. Entering
before the group, he found the king
and duly hailed him and them all.
"Sire, Erec and Guivret the Small
have sent me as their messenger."
Then he reported that they were
approaching court and now were near.
The king said: "They are welcome here
as valiant lords. I know that pair
cannot be bettered anywhere.
They'll lend my court a greater sheen."
Thereon the king sent for the queen
and told the news so she would know.
The others saddled up to go
to meet the lords; these messengers
did not delay in donning spurs,
they were in so much haste to mount.
I shall give you a brief account.
A crowd of folk of less renown
had come already to the town.
There were cupbearers, cooks, and servers
to staff the lodgings, while observers
pursued in an enormous band.

By then the pair were close at hand.
On entering the town, Guivret
6400 and Erec instantly were met;
embrace and greeting were exchanged.
They sought their lodgings, where they changed.
They rested and removed their clothes
and dressed up in their splendid robes,
and, when attired where they sojourned,
to court and king they all returned.
They came to court, where they were seen
6408 both by the king and joy-filled queen
a once Erec and Enide she spied.
b The king had them sit at his side,
c kissed Erec, then Guivret, then placed
d both arms around Enide, embraced
e and kissed her, and expressed great joy.
f The queen, uplifted, was not coy.
6409 In soaring spirits, hugging, talking,
6410 the queen could have been used for hawking.
They each endeavored to rejoice
until the king hushed every voice,
then questioned Erec and inquired
of what adventures had transpired.
First Erec let the hum abate,
and then he started to relate
adventures, overlooking none.
6420 Shall I tell how it had begun
and what event made him set out?
No, you well know the truth about
that episode and many another,
as I've disclosed, and will not bother
to give you all a fresh report,
because the story is not short
to start afresh and rearrange
the words he spoke of his exchange

with three, then five knights, to recount
the episode about the count
who wished to cause him so much shame,
then tell the way the giants came.
He told in order, nearly so,
all his adventures till the blow
the count took seated at his meal,
and how the blow he'd had to deal
had smashed the count's brow at his board,
and how his charger was restored.
The king said: "Erec, my dear friend,
remain in this land and attend
my court, as is your custom." "Sire,
I shall remain, since you desire,
at court and willingly belong
two years or even three years long,
but ask Guivret at court to dwell,
and I shall ask Guivret as well."
The king asked him and he remained.
So they both stayed, the king retained
both knights with him, once they appeared,
and they were cherished and revered.

EREC'S CORONATION

SO Erec stayed, as he agreed,
both with Guivret and with Enide;
some time the three did there abide
until the king his father died,
an aged man advanced in years.
Then messengers were sent, the peers
who went to seek him in a band.
The noblest men within his land
searched, asking where he might be bound,

with three, then five knights, to recount
the episode about the count
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Then messengers were sent, the peers
who went to seek him in a band.
The noblest men within his land
searched, asking where he might be bound,

till at Tintagel he was found
a week before the Christmas feast.
His father lay dead and deceased;
they told him truly how had fared
his father, aged and snowy-haired.
And Erec grieved at his demise
more than he let them realize.
It ill becomes a king to mourn,
to show his grief and look forlorn,
or to disclose a sorrow felt.
There at Tintagel, where he dwelt,
he had both vigil sung and mass,
made promises that came to pass,
and, as he promised, kept his vows
to church and to religious house
with more than due benevolence.
He chose poor wretched indigents,
more than one hundred sixty-nine,
and gave them clothing, new and fine;
to clerks and priests, poor and abject,
he gave black copes, as was correct,
with warm pelisses underneath.
For love of God, he did bequeath
much good to all; coins to the poor
he gave more than a bushel's store.
Then, after Erec had dispensed
his assets this way, he commenced
to do a wise and prudent thing.
He took his land back from the king,*
then asked a favor of this sort:
let him crown Erec at his court.
The king said make haste to prepare,
because they would be crowned a pair:
he with his wife placed at his side
at the forthcoming Christmastide,

and said: "We must go presently
from here to Nantes in Brittany.
A scepter in the fist you'll hold,
regalia and crown of gold;
this gift and honor I accord."
Then Erec thanked the king, his lord,
and said he had been liberal.
The king at Christmas gathered all
his barons, summoned one by one,
commanded that the ladies come,
and he was not refused by any,
and Erec also summoned many;
had many come, at his command,
and more lords came there than he planned
to offer service and acclaim.
I cannot tell you each one's name;
whichever barons came or not,
yet Erec by no means forgot
my lady Enide's own mother or father.
Quite otherwise, for he was rather
the first one summoned, and this man,
a rich lord now and castellan,
arrived at court most well endowed.
He had no chaplains in a crowd
or people foolish and dimwitted.
With good knights, people well outfitted,
each day he rode the whole day long.
Each day they rode so far along
with honor and festivity,
the eve of the Nativity
they came into the city Nantes.
They stopped nowhere in its expanse
until they entered the great hall;
the monarch and his people all
were there when they made their appearance.

b Enide and Erec saw her parents.
You know their joy; they left their place
and sped to give them an embrace.
With tenderness remarks were voiced,
and, fittingly, the pair rejoiced.
Once greetings were exchanged, all four
proceeded hand in hand before
the king, whom instantly they greeted,
and then the queen, for she was seated
beside the ruler of the land.
He took his host's hand in his hand,
then Erec stepped out front and told
his lord, the king: "Sire, you behold
both my good host and my good friend.
Such honor did this host extend
to me that of his own accord
he made me, in his household, lord.
When I was totally unknown
he gave me all that was his own.
His daughter too, to be precise,
with no one's counsel or advice
he's even given her to me."
"This lady with him, who is she?"
the king asked Erec, who revealed,
not leaving anything concealed,
"This lady of whom you inquire,
she is my wife's own mother, sire."
"Her mother?" "True, sire." "I declare
how very noble and how fair
must be the flower on such a shoot,
and better still must be the fruit
when picked from such a graft to eat.
Whatever comes of good smells sweet.
Enide is lovely to the sight
and fair by reason and by right.

Her lady mother is a beauty;
a knight of valor and of duty
for father does Enide possess,
and she is in no way the less
than either one in terms of praise.
She is like both in many ways,
possessing many traits of each."
The king refrained from further speech.
He ordered them to sit, not stand;
all sat, obeying his command.
Enide felt great joy, nothing other,
to see her father and her mother,
for such a length of time had passed
since she had seen her parents last.
Great joy increased within Enide,
and she was very pleased indeed.
She showed her great joy to her best,
but it was more than she expressed.
I won't say more, because my heart
draws me toward those from every part,
from many different countries all,
who had assembled in the hall.
Both counts and kings were present, lots
of Normans, Bretons, Irish, Scots,
from England and from Cornwall's bound;
and many rich lords were around,
because from Wales down to Anjou,
on down to Maine and to Poitou,
of knights of prominence and worth
and gentlewomen of high birth,
the finest ladies and gallants
were present at the court in Nantes
by royal summons to appear.
Now listen, I command you, hear:
with the court gathered, thereamong,

and when the hour of tierce was rung,
King Arthur had dubbed knights before,
four hundred knights that morn and more.
They all were sons of kings and counts,
and he gave each new knight three mounts
and three new pairs of robes to wear
so that his court would seem more fair.
The king had power and wished to splurge:
he did not give them cloaks of serge
or rabbit fur, cloth brown and rough,
but ermine fur and samite stuff,
whole vair fur, flowered silk he ordered,
with golden orphreys stiffly bordered.
So Alexander, conqueror,
subduing all the world by war,
who was so rich and generous,
seemed comparably penurious.
And Caesar, emperor of Rome,
in narrative and epic poem
all kings they tell you of by name,
bestowed no gifts of such acclaim
as at King Arthur's celebration
the day of Erec's coronation.
If Alexander had been paired
with Caesar, they would not have dared
to equal what that court did spend.
They had strewn cloaks from end to end
of every room; none would impede
whoever took a cloak at need.
From trunks they pulled out such apparel,
in midcourt sterlings blanch by barrel*
lay on a carpet: thirty gleamed.
At that time sterlings blanch were deemed
the currency of Britain whole;
it dated back from Merlin's role.

The coins could freely be acquired;
each took what sterling he desired
back to his lodging for that stay.
The hour of tierce on Christmas Day
they all assembled from each part.
How very full was Erec's heart
at this approaching joy and rapture.
No tongue or mouth of man can capture,
though eloquently words come forth,
a fifth, far less a third or fourth,
of fine things done in preparation
to celebrate his coronation.
It shows a total lack of wit
for me to try describing it,
but since I have to make a start,
I shan't refrain from telling part
of what was done in my own way
and will not heed what people say.
Within the hall were faldstools, two,
of ivory, white, fair, and new,
alike in semblance and in size.
A subtle craftsman did devise
the faldstools, for, ingenious,
he made the pair harmonious
in height and length and ornament.
One could not look with the intent
of matching them and so compare
and find a detail in one chair
that was not in the other one.
The chairs, with no wood, were all done
of finest ivory and gold
with carving lovely to behold.
Two of the legs were uniform
and carved like leopards in their form,
the other two like crocodiles.

A knight named Brian of the Isles*
once brought these faldstools that were seen
to give King Arthur and the queen.
King Arthur took one and desired
that Erec take its mate, attired
in watered silk, a robe of moiré.
By reading we find in the story
a picture of the robe for us.
My backer is Macrobius,
whose efforts and whose thoughtful plan
are in the story he began;
let no one lies to me ascribe.
Macrobius helps me describe
the way the cloth and portraits look,
as I have found them in the book.
Four fairies fashioned Erec's dress
with craftsmanship and great address.
The first portrayed Geometry,
who measures and surveys to see
how far the earth and sky can reach,
so nothing falls into a breach,
what depths they plumb, what heights they graze,
what length, what breadth, and then surveys
how deep and wide the ocean's berth,
and thus she measures the whole earth.
This work did the first fairy pick.
The second chose Arithmetic
to work and used her utmost powers,
the way she numbers days and hours
of passing time with accuracy,
and then the waters of the sea
by droplets, then by grains the sands,
stars one by one, and understands
the way to number, well and good,
how many leaves are in the wood.

She finds no number baffling
and never lies in anything.
Her application can be felt
in how she strives for the result:
Arithmetic by her depicter.
Then Music's shown in the third picture,
with whom all pleasure well accords;
both song and descant, sounds of chords,
of harp, of vielle, and of rote.
This Music portrait was of note:
all instruments and pleasures laid
before her, as she was portrayed.
Then the fourth fairy, working last,
portrayed the art that has surpassed
all other arts, most skillfully,
for she portrayed Astronomy
with all the wonders she has done,
consulting stars and moon and sun.
No other counsel does she heed
about the way she should proceed
to do whatever she desires,
because in all that she requires
they counsel her most faithfully
about what was and is to be
and make her certain of perception,
unmarred by falsehood or deception.
Thus Erec's robe was styled and made
of fabric with this work portrayed,
so woven, worked with gold thread shining,
and into it was sewn a lining
of pelts of a strange animal:
its head had blond fur overall,
its neck was dark mulberry black
but scarlet in the hue of back,
and green of belly, blue of tail.

From India these strange beasts hail,
born there and named "barbiolete,"*
and all their appetites will whet
are spice, fresh clove, and cinnamon.
Shall I say how the cloak was done?
It was extremely fair and splendid.
The tassels held four gems suspended:
two chrysolites were thus attached;
the tassels opposite, which matched,
held amethysts, two in gold set.
Enide at this time had not yet
come to the palace in due state.
The king, perceiving she was late,
directed Gawain to escort
Enide back to the palace court.
Gawain ran there, unhesitant,
and with him King Cadoalant
and liberal king of Galloway,
Guivret the Small went on his way,
and then the son of Nut, Yder,
then other lords ran in the rear
to bring the ladies to the hall.
They could have made an army fall;
some thousand men were on the scene.
Great pains were taken by the queen
to deck Enide, who was escorted
to palace on one side supported
by courteous Gawain that day.
The liberal king of Galloway,
paired with him, much of her did make
for his own nephew Erec's sake.
The ladies came there as a band.
King Arthur ran to meet them and
at Erec's side he placed Enide
to pay her honor and great heed

out of his own nobility.
The king, out of his treasury,
had two crowns taken, as he told,
all made of pure and massive gold.
When he had ordered what he sought,
the crowns were very promptly brought
before him, glowing diadems
with carbuncles; there were four gems
set in each crown to make them shimmer.
In contrast, moonlight would seem dimmer
than light cast by the smallest stone.
Because of how the jewels shone
and all the brilliant light they cast,
those in the palace grew at last
so dazzled by the crowns brought there
they could see nothing for the glare.
The king, though dazzled, felt delight
to see them beautiful and bright.
When some time passed, their eyes adjusted.
To two young maids the king entrusted
one crown and had two barons hold
the other crown, whereon he told
each bishop, abbot, and each priest
who was attending this great feast
now to come forward as appointed,
to have the new-made king anointed
according to the Christian law.
All prelates there began to draw
around in numbers, gray and young,
clerks, bishops, abbots thereamong.
A great and saintly nobleman
was Nantes's bishop, who began
anointing the new king with care,
his manner was devout and fair;
the crown on Erec's head he set.

King Arthur had them go and get
a scepter that was celebrated.
Hear how the scepter was created,
for it was fashioned of one sole
great emerald, the jewel whole
as large as a clenched fist in mass
and gleaming brighter than stained glass.
Now I shall make the truth be heard:
that every kind of flying bird
or fish, wild animal, or man
existing in the wide world's span,
each in the image of its own,
was worked and carved upon the stone.
They gave the scepter to the king,
who gazed upon it marveling,
then placed it, pausing for a mite,
within King Erec's hand, his right.
Now he was king, who should succeed,
and afterward they crowned Enide.
Already, mass bells had rung clear.
They entered the main church to hear
the mass and service at the sound
and prayed in the cathedral's bound.
Her father and mother could be seen
to weep from feeling joy so keen.
Her mother's name was Carsenefide,
whereas the father of Enide
was known as Liconal by name.
Both were elated. When they came
to the cathedral, monks processed
with treasures, crosses, relics blessed,
and censers, books of liturgy
outdoors to meet their company.
All monks within the monastery,
with relics and with reliquary

(the church had many such possession),
came out to meet them in procession
with steady chanting and much song.
None ever saw so large a throng
of kings or barons, dukes or counts
at one mass in such vast amounts.
The church was filled by such a presence,
and entry had been barred to peasants;
just knights and ladies were allowed.
Outside the church door was a crowd
of people, for there were still more,
so thick they blocked the entry door;
within the church they could not pass.
When they had heard the entire mass,
back to the castle they repaired,
where everything had been prepared
with tables set up and cloths laid.
Five hundred tables were arrayed;
you'll think that I exaggerate,
for it would seem a lie to state
the tables were set in one hall
together, that's not true at all.
There were five crowded halls, I mean,
and it was hard to pass between
the tables when proceeding through.
At every table, it is true,
there was a king or duke or count;
a hundred men, by truthful count,
sat at each table that was spread.
A thousand knights served them the bread,
a thousand others served the wine,
a thousand food on which to dine,
in ermine tunics finely dressed.
Though sundry courses to ingest
were served to all, I shan't relate

6878 each dish presented, but must wait.
a Although I could describe the platters,
b I must attend to other matters.
c Unstintingly and with great joy
d all had what things they would enjoy.
e When this feast reached its end, the king
f dismissed the weighty gathering
g of kings there present, dukes, and counts,
h all numerous, the tale recounts,
i and lesser people were released,
j and others who were at the feast.
k He generously gave horses, blades,
l and weapons, money, and brocades
m and cloth of every kind to take,
n from nobleness, and for the sake
o of Erec, his beloved friend,
p and here the tale comes to an end.
Here ends the romance of *Erec and Enide.*

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Chrétien de Troyes, "Philomena and Procne," 200–279.

2. Shirt, "How Much of the Lion," 1–17. Janssens, "Simultaneous Composition," 366–75.

3. See Stanger, "Literary Patronage," 214–39.

Chrétien's *Perceval* is thought to reflect many aspects of the young king's adolescent personality and early life that hint at closeness to the court of Louis VII. *Perceval* contains a reference to a charcoal seller in verse 835. Two days before his coronation, which had been scheduled at his ill father's request for 15 August 1179, Philip Augustus was lost in the forest at Compiègne and guided back to the castle by a charcoal seller. His terror precipitated a nervous breakdown that resulted in the postponement of his coronation. Lejeune, "Date du *Conte du Graal*," 65–67, 75. Louis VII, Philip Augustus's godfather, Count Philip of Flanders, and Philip Augustus's uncle, Guillaume aux Blanches Mains, archbishop of Reims, made a pilgrimage to Canterbury to pray for his recovery. Adams, *History of England*, 332–33. Butler notes in *Quest:* "In 1179 King Louis VII of France gave a cup of pure gold, a huge ruby known as the Régale of France, and an annual allowance of about 1,600 gallons of wine" to Canterbury (20).

4. Gerbert de Montreuil writes that Chrétien left *Perceval* unfinished:

> Ce nous dist Crestiens de Troie
> Qui de Percheval comencha
> Mais la mors qui l'adevancha
> Ne li laissa pas traire affin . . .

[Chrétien de Troyes, who began the story of Perceval, told us this, but death, which overtook him, did not let him bring it to an end.] (Gerbert de Montreuil, *Continuation*, vv. 6984–6987, 214.)

5. The dates of Chrétien de Troyes's romances are disputed. Nitze proposes the earliest range of dates: after 1158 for *Erec and Enide;* after 1164 for *Lancelot;* around 1170 for *Yvain;* and before 1181 for *Perceval*, in *Perceval and the Holy Grail*, 284–85). The dates of 1170 for *Erec*, 1176 for *Cligès*, 1177 to 1179 or 1181 for *Yvain* and *Lancelot*, and after 1181 for *Perceval* are given by Frappier, *Chrétien de Troyes*, 9. Uitti with Freeman date *Erec* 1165, *Cligès* 1176–1178, *Lancelot* and *Yvain* 1179–1180, and *Perceval* c. 1190, in *Chrétien de Troyes Revisited*, xiv. Luttrell proposes that Chrétien's romances were written during a shorter and later period between 1184 and 1190, in *Creation*, 32.

6. The love songs are entitled "Amors tançon et bataille" and "D'Amors, qui m'a tolu a moi." The latter song mentions the potion with which Tristan was poisoned. In both songs Love is personified as a masterful opponent. The songs are contained in Chrétien de Troyes, *Chansons courtoises.*

7. Mickel Jr. states in "Theme": "The debate over the authenticity of the work has raged since the mid-nineteenth century, with Foerster, Groeber, and Wilmotte arguing strongly in favor of the text's authenticity and Gaston Paris, Paul Meyer, and Jean Frappier voicing doubts and generally negative feelings about the quality of the *roman*" (52).

8. *New Arthurian Encyclopedia,* 37. Because of its reference to "le mal dagres" in v. 3849, Beroul's *Tristan* tends to be dated by the siege of Acre in the winter of 1190–1191.

9. Vitz, *Orality,* considers Chrétien de Troyes to have been an exceptionally gifted minstrel whose literary background was acquired through exposure to the culture of the court (86–135). In "Lancelot du Lac: Le Conte de la Charrette," *Romania* 12 (1883): 480, footnote 1, Gaston Paris bases his not widely accepted theory that Chrétien was a herald on a passage in *Lancelot* where a herald announces the disguised Lancelot at a tournament as:

> "Now one has come to take their measure!"
> The herald used this cry with pleasure
> and taught us others this outburst;
> our herald teacher said it first.

(Cline, *Lancelot,* 154, vv. 5571–5574.) Holmes postulates that Chrétien was a converted Jew in *Chrétien de Troyes,* 23.

10. Chrétien de Troyes, *Philomena,* ed. De Boer, introduction, xxxviff. The Anglo-Norman imperfect subjunctive form *peüst* in the rhyme is not used in *Erec.* The form *peüst* is used in *Philomena* and in early *Cligès,* where a shift occurs to the central French form of *pöist.*

De Boer, "*Philomena* a-t-il été 'remanié'?", 81–86.

11. Williams, "Chrestiiens li Gois," 67–71, reviews the literature on the discussion about possible meanings of *li Gois.* He makes two important points. First, other redactors attributed *li Gois* to Chrétien's name in *Philomena,* whereas the author refers to himself twice as Chrétien. Second, *li Gois* probably means "joyous" or "the joy," an emotion that is frequently mentioned in Chrétien's work.

12. Holmes, *Chrétien de Troyes,* 22–23. Benton, "The Court of Champagne as a Literary Center," 561–63. Benton identifies both Chrétiens as canons and suggests that they may be the same person.

13. Another Chrétien at Chartres in Blois, a famous twelfth-century rhetorician and preacher named Chrétien de Saint-Père, was noted for his sophisticated interpretations

and symmetrical rhymes. See Clerval, *Ecoles,* 308, 313–14. Archishop Guillaume would have known that Thomas à Becket once used the pseudonym "Chrétien" when he fled from Northampton to Soissons in 1164. Garnier describes how Becket disguised himself: "In order to keep himself hidden, he put on a brother's gray habit—now Thomas was Thomas no longer, but was called Christian." *Garnier's Becket,* 55–56.

14. The rarity of the name in this context is an additional argument for the authenticity of *Guillaume d'Angleterre* as a work of Chrétien de Troyes.

15. *Gallia Christiana,* vol. 7, cols. 497–98.

16. Paris, Review of *Cligès,* 249.

17. Foulon, "Tendances aristocratiques," 222–37.

18. Seeing Sir Gawain decline to participate in a tournament, a group of aristocratic ladies pronounces him a merchant or money changer, not a knight. *Perceval,* vv. 5060ff.

19. Erec is the son of the king of Further Wales. Alexander is the son of the emperor of Constantinople, and his son Cligès inherits the throne. Yvain is the son of King Urien. Lancelot is traditionally the natural son of King Ban of Benoic. Perceval's father is thought to be a king of North Wales; his mother is identified as the sister of the Grail king. Guillaume d'Angleterre is king of England.

20. Bullock-Davies, "Chrétien de Troyes," 42–43.

21. Bullock-Davies, "Chrétien de Troyes," 34.

22. Uitti with Freeman, *Chrétien de Troyes Revisited,* 17–18.

23. The quadrivium was emphasized at Chartres in the eleventh century, although by the mid-twelfth-century there was increased interest in light poetry and rhetoric. Hunt, "Redating Chrestien de Troyes," 209–11, comments upon the Platonism and Neoplatonism, the developments in the quadrivium, and the poetic practices nourished by the trivium at Chartres. He notes that Macrobius, who wrote the Commentary on Cicero's "Dream of Scipio" and who inspired Chrétien's description of Erec's coronation robe (Erec, v. 6676), was one of the most important authors whose texts were glossed and commented upon at that center of learning.

Ehret, *"Passe avant le meilleur,"* 150; Arbois de Jubainville, *Histoire,* vol. 3, 184–88.

24. Uitti with Freeman notes that the canon of *auctores* of the trivium included Boethius, Virgil, Ovid, Statius, Cicero, Horace, Suetonius, St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, Origen, Eusebius, Priscian, Macrobius, Martianus Capella, and St. Isidore of Seville, in *Chrétien de Troyes Revisited,* 18.

25. Benkov, "Hyginus' Contribution," 403–6. In vv. 1452–1453, Chrétien follows Hyginus in having Procne become a swallow and Philomena a nightingale.

26. John of Salisbury, *Polycraticus,* xxix. John of Salisbury was exiled from England as a supporter of Becket, returned to England following Becket's assassination in 1171, and was appointed bishop of Chartres in 1176. He discusses court flatterers in book 3.

27. Loomis, *Arthurian Tradition,* 464.

28. *Cligès* is taken from a tale of feigned death known as "Solomon's Wife" allegedly in a book at the church library of St. Peter of Beauvais. *Guillaume d'Angleterre's* source is the Byzantine stories of the *Life of St. Eustache/Placidas* and *Apollonius of Tyre,* purportedly in the monastery library of Bury St. Edmunds.

29. Leclercq, *Love of Learning.*

30. There are three significant passages in *Erec:* vv. 1438–1458, Enide weeps with her parents at parting; vv. 2479–2491, Enide weeps over the sleeping Erec; vv. 2738–2746, the king and people weep as Erec starts out on adventure. The verb *plorer* occurs frequently in *Philomena.* False tears enable Tereus to gain control of Philomena's person (vv. 531–577). Pandion weeps as Philomena leaves with Tereus (vv. 722, 724). Tereus uses false tears with Procne to conceal her sister's death (vv. 926, 936–937, 942). The reunion of the sisters is marked by weeping (vv. 1267–1285). In *Cligès,* the hero weeps when parting from Fenice (sincerity of love). In *Yvain,* vv. 1406–1424, Laudine weeps while Yvain falls in love. Weeping occurs in *Yvain* (v. 2580), *Lancelot* (v. 4262), and *Perceval* (v. 6496).

31. Chrétien draws particularly fine portraits of women, the natural audience for vernacular literature. The character of Guinevere is so finely drawn that the image Chrétien created of that queen has come down to us unchanged over eight centuries. His inspiration may have been Eleanor of Aquitaine. See Owen, *Eleanor of Aquitaine,* 180–89.

32. Bullock-Davies, "Chrétien de Troyes," 16–18, notes that when Alexander sails to England, he lands below Southampton on the double afternoon tide in May and rides the twelve miles to Winchester between sunrise and prime. Chrétien accurately describes the long day's march of twenty-five miles between London and Windsor that King Arthur's army takes to pursue a traitor count, and he gives a detailed description of Windsor Castle, inside and out, with its walls, baileys, and keep, including the desiccated Thames River with its gravel bank and the sun setting the tents agleam below the castle on Datchet Mead. Cligès participates in a great tournament held on a tourney field between Wallingford and Oxford that was probably in use in King Stephen's reign (27–29).

33. Eyton, *Court,* 132–38.

34. In the summer Henry the Young King traveled through Surrey, Wiltshire, Dorset, Somerset, Worcestershire, Staffordshire, and Winchester. Eyton, *Court,* 144–45.

35. Chrétien read the description of Brocéliande Forest and the fountain of Barenton in Wace's *Roman de Rou,* but he goes into much more detail. As an example of the historical grounding of Wace's description (Wace, *Roman de Rou,* vol. 3, vv. 6373–6395, 121–22), Chrétien rephrases Wace's lines as "a fool I went, a fool I came" in *Yvain*

but supplies the salient feature of the fountain of Barenton: it is a dark peat spring whose cold water bubbles continuously like water about to boil because of the released gases.

The king of England was at Rennes in May 1169 and spent Christmas at Nantes. Warren, *Henry II,* 101, 110. See appendix, footnote 15. Laurie postulated that Chrétien was in Brittany in 1169 and 1170, attached to the English royal household, and in contact with the king's sons, Henry and Geoffrey, in "Chrétien and the English Court," 85–86. See also Carroll, "Quelques observations," 33–39.

36. Bullock-Davies, "Chrétien de Troyes," 15, 25.

37. *Cligès,* v. 1047; Bullock-Davies, "Chrétien de Troyes," 14.

38. *Erec,* v. 6668; Schmolke-Hasselmann, "Henry II Plantagenet," 245, notes that Brian de Wallingford, also known as Brian Fitz Count, Brian de Insula, or Brian of the Isle, the natural son of Alain Fergent, count of Brittany, was the best friend of Henry II and helped him attain the English throne.

Cligès, v. 4543; Bullock-Davies, "Chrétien de Troyes," 27–29.

39. The Norman descendants of William the Conqueror welcomed stories that supported their domination of the Anglo-Saxons by describing the fifth-century Saxon conquest of the Britons as a brutal one. Driven into Wales and across the Channel to Brittany between the fifth and seventh centuries, the Britons cherished tales of their war leader Arthur, who had fiercely resisted the Saxons until he fell in battle. Arthur was mentioned in the Welsh poem *Gododdin* (c. 600) and in the *Historia Brittonum* (History of the Britons) (c. 800) by the Welsh priest Nennius. See Eisner, *Tristan Legend,* 8–13.

40. Uitti with Freeman notes that the Capets of France claimed Charlemagne as an ancestor, and Arthur is presented as a worthy rival, in *Chrétien de Troyes Revisited,* 22.

41. Hoepffner, "Philomena," 45.

42. Wace calls himself a fool for visiting the fountain of Barenton to see whether it could cause rain:

> Fol m'en revins, fol i alai,
> Fol i alai, fol m'en revins,
> Folie quis, por fol me tins.

(Wace, *Roman de Rou,* vol. 3, vv. 6397–6398.) Chrétien repeats these lines in *Philomena,* vv. 503–504:

> Si m'an irai si con je ving,
> Ains mes por si fol ne me ting

and in *Yvain*, vv. 577–578:

Ensi alai, ensi reving;
Au revenir por fol me ting.

(Schulze-Busacker, "*Philomena*," 478–79.)

43. Fourrier dates Thomas 1172–1176, 1172 being the date when England seized Ireland, in *Courant réaliste*, 19–109.

44. The reference to St. Samson's Isle in *Erec and Enide* (v. 1242) is not derived from the source for the *Tristans* of Thomas and Béroul, in which the island where Morholt was slain is not named. The name St. Samson's Isle shows that Chrétien was familiar with a different version of the legend that became a source for the prose *Tristan* of the second quarter of the thirteenth century and Robert de Boron's *Merlin*, written in 1200. St. Samson's Isle is mentioned in *Le roman de Tristan en prose*, vol. 3, 112–14, and in *Merlin: Roman en prose*, vol. 2, 240. See also *New Arthurian Encyclopedia*, 320–21, 372–75, 462–64.

45. The versions of *Cligès* that contain the *a mer/amer* pun and the *cors/cuer* dichotomy show that in the later romance Chrétien was influenced by Thomas. See Freeman, "*Cligès*," 106.

46. Independent Brittany was in a strategic location between Henry II's Normandy and Eleanor's Aquitaine, and Henry was determined to control it. Henry II established his brother Geoffrey as count of Nantes in 1156, the year when Conan IV (the Small), earl of Richmond, became duke of Brittany, with his seat at Rennes. Upon Geoffrey's death in July 1158, Henry II assumed control of Nantes. In 1166 Henry II deposed Conan and betrothed his young son, Geoffrey, to Conan's heiress, Constance. Warren, *Henry II*, 76–77, 100–101.

47. By 1173, the sons of Henry II, with their mother's encouragement, allied themselves with Louis VII of France and rebelled against their father. Arbois de Jubainville, *Histoire*, vol. 3, 94, notes that Count Henri of Champagne and his brother Count Thibaut of Blois joined forces with Louis VII and Henry the Young King in an attempt to conquer Normandy. Henry II prevailed, and, while he forgave his sons, he captured Eleanor and imprisoned her for sixteen years in Salisbury Castle. Eleanor's court at Poitiers was disbanded in 1174. Chrétien's description of Windsor Castle corresponds to the period when it was under construction during the years 1168–1174. Bullock-Davies, "Chrétien de Troyes," 16–18, cites W. H. St. John Hope, *Windsor Castle: an Architectural History* (1913), 17–18: "The internal dissentions that began to trouble the kingdom in 1167 and 1168 are reflected at Windsor by the important defensive works undertaken from 1169 onwards, immediately after the King's return from his long stay in Normandy, and the rebellion of 1173 found the castle partly protected by its new defences which

continued to be made stronger notwithstanding the peace in the autumn of 1174." She confirms this period of 1168–1174 (25).

48. Middleton, "Chwedl Geraint ab Erbin," 147–48. Uitti with Freeman mentions this Celtic story of a prince who marries a beautiful maiden and jealously suspects her of infidelity, in *Chrétien de Troyes Revisited,* 36–38. The story is sometimes referred to as *Proto-Gereint.* Uitti with Freeman also mentions allusions to Martianus Capella's *De nuptiis Mercurii et Philologiae (On the Marriage of Mercury and Philology),* an early fifth-century work used in the schools, and to the contemporary story of the love affair between Abelard and Heloise.

49. See Duby, *Knight,* for a study on the making of modern marriage in medieval France. See also his *Medieval Marriage* and *Chivalrous Society.*

50. McCash, "Mutual Love," 429–38. McCash notes on pp. 430–33 that mutual love in marriage was supported by Hugh of Saint-Victor in his *De sacramentis christianae fidei* (c. 1134) and by St. Bernard of Clairvaux in sermon 67 on the *Song of Songs* (1135–1153). The troubadour Bernard de Ventadorn also supported mutual love when writing for Eleanor of Aquitaine.

51. Maddox, *Structure and Sacring,* 144–47.

52. *Manuscrits,* ed. Busby et al., vol. 1, 13. See also Chrétien de Troyes, *Erec et Enide,* ed. Roques, xxviii–xxxii, and Chrétien de Troyes, *Erec and Enide,* ed. Carroll, introduction by Kibler, xxiv–xxvii.

53. *Manuscrits,* ed. Busby et al., vol. 1, 2.

54. Kibler, *Introduction,* xxiii–xxvii.

TEXT

313. King Yder is an ally of King Arthur and not the unidentified knight with the dwarf, who will prove to be Yder, son of Nut (v. 1042).

375. A vavasor was a medieval nobleman ranking below a baron who held his fief from a nobleman instead of from the king.

424. Iseult, or Isolde, was the wife of King Mark of Cornwall and the lover of his nephew Tristan.

569. After the first year, hawks molt annually; that is, they shed their feathers and grow new plumage.

632. The rash boon, in which a person agrees to grant an unknown favor, is a frequent impetus to adventure in Arthurian romances. It is used again in *Erec* in "The Joy of the Court," vv. 6007ff., and in *Cligès,* vv. 87ff. and 1809ff. In *Lancelot,* King Arthur's promise to grant Kay anything he wants results in the queen's abduction.

652. "King Lac's the father whom I claim, / and Erec is my Breton name." Erec is a Breton

name. Loomis notes, in *Arthurian Tradition*, 70: "M. Ferdinand Lot showed long since (*Romania* 25 [1896], 588) that the name Erec was developed from the Breton Guerec, borne conspicuously by a Count of Nantes, son of Alain Barbe-Torte, in the tenth century."

710. The Celtic prototypes for Chrétien's beautiful, charming, and adroit heroines were fairies, but Chrétien shows that Enide is human by having her eschew spells and charms.

714. The ventail is a flap of mail laced to the hood, or coif, to protect the lower face.

1327. Gray fur and vair are furs from the back and spotted belly of the squirrel.

1506. Perceval of Wales, who first appears here, will be the hero of Chrétien's last romance, *Perceval; or, The Story of the Grail.*

1571. Purple was a fabric of indeterminate color, often green, black, or crimson as well as purple, worn by persons of the highest rank.

1670ff. This list of the knights of the Round Table is the first time that Lancelot du Lac and other prominent knights are mentioned. See West, *Index of Proper Names,* for these knights.

1687. Tristan is actually a version of the name Dursten. The French wordplay on Tristan and *triste* is generally attributed to the sad circumstances of his birth, when both his parents died, not to a morose personality. In Hilaire Belloc's translation of *The Romance of Tristan and Iseult,* as retold by Joseph Bédier, 12, Tristan's mother names her newborn son: "And as by sadness you came into the world, your name shall be called Tristan; that is the child of sadness."

1700. The tradition that King Arthur's illegitimate son was named Mordred was not firmly established. Chrétien is familiar with a source for the thirteenth-century *Perlesvaus,* in which Loholt, the legitimate son of Arthur and Guinevere, is slain by Sir Kay. Bryant, *The High Book of the Grail,* 175–76.

1766. Upon his accession Henry II dealt with the anarchy that had ensued during the civil war of the reign of Stephen by restoring the laws, customs, and property rights of the reign of his grandfather Henry I. See Warren, *Henry II,* 62.

1796. *Erec* can be analyzed as a three-part romance consisting of the hunt of the white stag with its internal story of Enide and the sparrow hawk, the estrangement, adventures, and reconciliation of Erec and Enide, and the Joy of the Court. This phrase indicates the end of the first section.

1823. A bezant is a gold coin of the Byzantine empire.

1828. Further Wales is a translation of d'Estre-Gales. Loomis states in *Arthurian Tradition,* 70–71, that Estre-Gales, or Destregales, is thought to be Deheubarth (in Welsh, the right-hand part of Wales) or South Wales. Another possibility is Strathclyde in southwest Scotland. The region and its towns have not been identified.

1907. Morgan the Fay is the half sister of King Arthur by their mother, Igraine. She appears in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Life of Merlin,* 100–101, vv. 908–926, as the oldest of

nine sisters living on the Isle of Apples, the Fortunate Isle (Avalon), where men live a hundred years or more. Geoffrey presents Morgan as beautiful, kind, skilled in healing (see *Erec,* vv. 4194ff.), and able to change shape and fly through the air. The thirteenth-century Vulgate Cycle contains the story to which Chrétien refers about how Queen Guinevere made an enemy of Morgan by terminating her love affair with Guiomar, or Guingamar.

1978. Using the literary technique of *retardatio,* Chrétien often does not disclose a character's name until well into the romance. Enide's parents are named in vv. 6833–6835. In his romance *Lancelot,* the hero's name is not disclosed until v. 3660. In *Yvain,* Laudine, the lady of Landuc, is not named until her marriage to the hero in v. 2003. In *Perceval,* the hero is forced to guess his own name in v. 3574. It appears that even Erec has not learned Enide's name until this point.

1992. A vielle is a stringed musical instrument like a fiddle, which can be played like a hurdy-gurdy.

2023. Brangien was Iseult's handmaiden, who took Iseult's place in King Mark's bed on her wedding night so he would not discover that Iseult had lost her virginity to his nephew Tristan.

2028. The reference is to Psalm 42:1: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God."

2074. Detailed descriptions of melee tournaments are conspicuous features of Chrétien's *Erec, Cligès* (vv. 2839ff. and 4542ff.), and *Lancelot* (vv. 5359ff.). Henry II prohibited these brutal war games in England, and they were banned by Canon 20 of the Third Lateran Council of 1179 because of their dangers. Nonetheless they were popular in France and attracted the nobility of many lands. The arms, armor, harness, and war horses were expensive to acquire and, when seized, became valuable prizes. The ransom for captured knights was an important source of income to landless knights. Like hunting, tournaments were a way for the fighting class to exercise its skills in peacetime.

2196. The medieval church kept time in order to ring the bells and observe the seven church offices at the appointed hour. Everyone else told time by the same system. In addition to the customary rising time of daybreak, the seven canonical hours are matins, often said in the small hours of the morning, prime (6 A.M.), tierce (9 A.M.), sext (noon), none (3 P.M.), vespers (sundown), and compline (early bedtime).

2315. Sargent-Baur contends in "Erec, novel seignor," 552–58, that "new lord" means "young lord." In the thirteenth-century *Geraint and Enid,* Geraint is indeed their new lord, because he returns home at his father's request to rule their lands during his father's lifetime.

2333. This gold cross is a reliquary allegedly containing a fragment of the cross on which Jesus was crucified. Christ's sacrifice of his innocent life was believed to have expiated Adam's original sin of disobedience to God, which Adam committed by

eating the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden at the diabolical advice of the serpent. The devil is sometimes called the Enemy. According to Genesis, God's punishments of Adam and his descendants included death, often described as a prison. Christ's death for the sins of humankind was believed to have won release from death and eternal life of the spirit.

2355. A chasuble is a sleeveless outer vestment worn by the celebrant at mass.

2359. The Parlous Vale, also known as the *Val sans Retour* or Valley of No Return, is mentioned in the thirteenth-century Vulgate Cycle as an enchanted place with invisible walls where Morgan kept her lovers. See *New Arthurian Encyclopedia,* 485. Chrétien describes a similar place in the enchanted orchard of the Joy of the Court.

2361. Almería is a Mediterranean seaport in southern Spain.

2491. Lacy notes in *The Craft of Chrétien de Troyes,* 42, that Enide's monologue "is practically the first time she has spoken, and it is literally the first time Chrétien has quoted her words."

2546. Enide's "you had no equal anywhere" echoes Erec's comment "she has no equal anywhere" in v. 1038.

2577. Since Erec intends to refute the charges of cowardice by defending Enide alone, her rich attire will make her a tempting target.

2632. Medieval floors were covered with rushes and debris. The rug prevented foreign objects from getting inside the armor. Leopards were on the coat of arms of the English king.

3588. An arpent is a variable measure equal to approximately an acre.

3935. Gringalet, usually "the Gringalet," is the traditional name of Gawain's horse. The steed is stolen in *Perceval.*

3938ff. Chrétien consistently portrays the seneschal Kay as a sarcastic braggart and a poor fighter. This scene, where Kay is unhorsed for his rudeness and courteous Sir Gawain then coaxes the hero to court, is repeated in *Perceval* (vv. 4280ff.).

4340. See Stuard, "Ancillary Evidence," 3–28, for the persistence of female slavery in the twelfth century. These slaves, called *ancillae,* worked in the household and in the textile workshops. They were bought and sold and were not permitted to marry. Cligès has a serf named John whose condition borders on slavery.

4581. The scene of the hero or heroine lamenting over a loved one presumed dead and contemplating suicide is taken from the tale of Pyramus and Thisbe. Chrétien includes similar scenes in *Cligès* (vv. 6059ff.) and *Lancelot* (vv. 4180ff. and 4258ff.) and parodies them in *Yvain* (vv. 3318ff., where the lion attempts suicide).

5280. The significance of the green line separating the white and black side of its head is explained by Thomas D. Hill in terms of Salernitan color theory in "Enide's Colored Horse," 526: "According to the Salernitan master, the color green is most beautiful because it mediates exactly between two conflicting extremes—white and black."

5291. The story of Aeneas is contained in the Old French *Eneas* written in 1160 as well as in the original Latin *Aeneid* by Virgil.

5417. Loomis suggests in *Arthurian Tradition* that the name was originally "The Joy of the Horn," since the Old French *corz* or *cors* means both "court" and "horn."

5460. This scene of people in a dangerous place warning off the hero is repeated in *Yvain* at the Castle of Evil Adventure.

5690. Morgan the Fay had such a magic place in the Val sans Retour. Tristan and Iseult meet in an orchard and refer to the enchanted orchard of which the harpers sing (Bédier, *The Romance of Tristan and Iseult,* 83). Cligès and Fenice tryst in an orchard (v. 6111).

5726ff. Thibaut the Slav is a Saracen mentioned in the Guillaume d'Orange cycle. See *La prise d'Orange,* v. 253, 53, and West, *Index of Proper Names,* 152. According to West, Ospinal is the name of a king of Babylon in a lost chanson de geste and of a Saracen in *Gaufrei* (126). Fernagu is a Saracen king killed by Roland (62).

5840. Lavinia of Laurentum was Aeneas's wife.

5912. Vienne is a French city on the Rhône.

6488. A medieval legal fiction was that all land belonged to the king and his barons held it by permission of their royal overlord. The heir of a deceased baron had to pay an inheritance tax called "relief" to the king and confirm his allegiance in order to hold the land.

6628. To blanch a coin is to give it a white luster by using acids. Bullock-Davies, "Chrétien de Troyes," 52–54, identifies the sterling blanch as English money, "assayed silver of full weight, the blanching being an operation peculiar to the English Exchequer . . . In 1157/58 a new sterling (silver penny) coinage was issued and blanching stepped up."

6668. See note 38 to the introduction.

6739. Burgess and Curry, "'Si ont berbïoletes non,'" 129–39, identify the "barbiolete" as the douc langur monkey, *Pygathrix nemaeus.* The douc langur has patches of blond, black, red, greenish gray, and bluish fur (132–33). Burgess and Curry note that "contrefetes bestes" should be translated as "strange animals," observing that since "the monkey impressed the Middle Ages as an animal capable of imitating Man . . . it is possible that Chrétien's use of the expression 'contrefete beste' in *Erec* would have been sufficient to imply to his audience that the animal he was referring to was a monkey." Burgess and Curry also note that Henry I of England kept a zoo at Woodstock and that Henry of Blois, bishop of Winchester, kept a zoo at Winchester (134).

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